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BACK... FROM BEYOND

The long-awaited Director's Cut of Stuart Gordon's gooey gore classic *From Beyond*, containing new material previously excised by the MPAA, premieres next month in high definition on *Monsters HD*. Gordon tells us the story behind the recovery and restoration of the lost footage. Plus: Stars Jeffrey Combs, Barbara Crampton and screenwriter-Deanis Paoli reminisce on making the film. by Joseph O'Brien, Dave Alexander, and John W. Bowen

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Tune in to *Monsters HD*, television's first and only 24-hour high def horror channel. Plus: 2006 programming highlights. by Jovanka Vuckovic

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Note From Underground



When I was still a kid I remember sneaking over to a buddy's place to watch horror movies. By this time my friends and I were well-versed in the early works of future genre superstar Jason Voorhees, along with those of his popular masked colleague Mike Myers, and newcomer Fred Krueger. Some of us even had the fortune of seeing titles from Romero, Fulci, Argento, and Cronenberg, thanks to late-night TV and the local mom and pop video store that would rent R-rated films to pretty much anything with three bucks and a creative lie.

Thinking ourselves cultured genre connoisseurs, we were always looking for the next big thrill, something that by its own perversity would leave a fibrous and memorable scar we'd be proud to wear. But nothing we had seen up to that point had ever prepared us for what we were about to witness that one cool autumn evening.

It was a film that was talked about only in hushed tones, as if the mere mention of it would summon police to our doorsteps. It was "banned," "illegal"... and desirable. It was also near impossible to find, and as such there was question about whether it really existed outside the whispers of urban legend. But evidently it did because that night my friend had an "older brother who had a friend who had a friend" (as it always went) who managed to procure an overhyped, picilated, stretched-out VHS copy of none other than Ruggero Deodato's *Cannibal Holocaust*.

I remember distinctly that none of us actually wanted to touch it. It was, after all, the Holy Grail of underground horror cinema. The rumours that surrounded it were paramount, apparently the atrocities within were real: people were raped, mutilated, eviscerated and eaten. Even animals were killed! We were terrified – parents could walk in at any time, trouble was imminent. We felt as if we were doing something forbidden just by agreeing to watch it, which made it all the more appealing. Someone inserted the tape.

And the most controversial film in horror history lived up to its name, we were utterly disgusted, horrified and shocked. *Cannibal Holocaust* really was the dirty gel on the genre block that went all the way – holy Hell, they cut off that turtle's head and legs, then gutted it through its breastplate and ate it – alive! A woman was raped with a rock! Another, pregnant, had her foetus ripped right from her vagina by filthy mad-stunned hands. Through the grimy haze of multi-generation duplication, we saw everything we'd see and more. We felt ill and dirty for having watched it, because it all looked so... real. Did we just watch people actually die?

As it turns out, the animal killings were real and the rest was cinematic trickery – really good cinematic trickery. The infamous woman impaled on the pole was actually sitting on a bicycle seat with her head taped back and a piece of balsa wood jammed into her mouth, the nasty *Africa Addio*-style 16mm "film within a film" documentary *The Last Road To Hell* was by its design a well-executed fake, and so on. It was this deliberate combination of real and unreal violence that made the movie so damned effective.

Like many horror fans I sometimes lament being a grown-up because we're now relatively immune to such clever cinematic deception. There is an unfair duality to growing up because on the one hand, you can't wait to turn eighteen so you can see and experience those coveted R and X-rated films, but on the other hand, the older you get, the more wise you become to the ruse. As adults, we're forced to "suspend disbelief" in favour of naively believing what we are seeing to be true, which could explain the old-repeat comment, "I remember it being so much better when I was a kid."

I felt a great sense of loss when I discovered horror films weren't real. It shattered the illusion, which in turn made it harder for me to experience fear while watching one. Don't get me wrong, I obviously still enjoy horror movies, just not like I used to. There was something so exhilarating about thinking Haddonfield was an actual place or that the house on 112 Ocean Avenue was, in fact, demonic. Perhaps that's the reason why ghost stories are the only ones that retain a glimmer of that magic, because we're still not entirely sure if they're real or not.

It's that uncertainty that always got me. The possibility that some movies – like *The Exorcist*, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *The Changeling*, and even something as outrageous and cruel as *Cannibal Holocaust* – really are "based on true events" was perfectly terrifying. I miss that.

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COVER FROM BEYOND
DESIGNED BY GARY PULLIN

We always appreciate its published monthly (with the exception of February) and would be happy to provide you with our editorial content, photos, art or other materials. Please submit all correspondence by SASE. We will be seriously considered and, if necessary, referred.

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Post Mortem

QUESTIONS • COMMENTS • CRITICISM

I HAD TO write to let you know how great your editorial in the new issue is. Your comments on adult films and horror were right on. Many people enjoy adult entertainment, not just rapists and child pornographers. I happen to collect adult films as well as horror, sci-fi, action etc.; they are just movies, fantasies acted out, nothing more. Some splatter porn you may have missed. Edward Lee's *Grab Girl*, is based on the short story in *Hot Blood* Wicked also has 2 *Lovers Love* which is much better than most slasher films, and *Camp Cuddly Pines Power Tool Massage* is a spoof that's much funnier than all four *Scary Movies* put together. Thanks *Rue Morgue* for once again getting it right

John Mclemore – address withheld

I ALWAYS THOUGHT I was quite the horror guy till I read this magazine. It knocked me from pillar to post and opened my eyes to films, music, and stuff I would have never have known about. And as time goes on it has become better and better. *RM55* is proving to be another great success, the main article on Jean Rollin's films and XXX horror is stellar.

Jason "Jayson" Lloyd – United Kingdom

IT WAS NICE to see an article about one of the more fun things to come out of horror comics in the '80s. I missed the initial *Deadworld* experience, and may have missed it altogether, had the first story are not been reprinted in the early '90s in a trade paperback. It was great to hear that there's a possibility *Deadworld* may become a movie after all, it deserves it every bit as much as *Siege* Niles' *30 Days of Night*. If I see both of these stories end up as well-adapted films by or before 2010, I'll be ecstatic.

Kevin Kennedy – Halifax, Nova Scotia

I WANTED TO SAY thank you for the wonderful article. It's been a long journey just getting this far with my book (*Monster Island*), and *Rue Morgue* has been with me all the way. Monica gave me my first review, just a little blip in the "Road-kill", but it was a great way to start for an unknown author. Now this well-written, gorgeous-looking article. One of the best parts of this process has been that the people who've been the most supportive are the ones I respect the most. It's too early to say what kind of success *Monster Island* will see, but regardless, I owe some of that achievement to you and your terrific magazine.

Dave Wellington – New York, New York

I JUST RECEIVED the latest issue of *RM* and was thrilled to see Chris Alexander's article on *Texas Chainsaw 2*. It's one of those horror flicks that often gets swept aside and overshadowed by the success and huge popularity of its predecessor. Hilarious lines of dialogue and one of the best covers ever, *TCM 2* should get huge props from the horror community for taking a tried and true formula and changing it up! Hopefully this nugget of horror greatness will get some pristine double disc treatment in the future!

Mark Phillips – address withheld

IT WAS WITH great interest that I read your excellent coverage of *The Hills Have Eyes*, in particular the vidcar on the legend of the 15th-century cannibal Sawney Bean. I have recently completed – and am seeking a publisher for – the manuscript for my novel, *The Final King*, which dramatizes this infamous account. As someone who spent the better part of a year researching this particular historical horror, I'd like to congratulate Tom Murray on getting the facts straight on a subject rife with misconception and speculation; the only misstep in the article was the headline: *The Highlands Have Eyes*, it must be pointed out that all of Bean's alleged crimes were committed in and around the area of East Lothian (which he correctly mentions in the article) which is, in fact, in the Scottish Lowlands. Thanks to *Rue Morgue* and its staff for persistently engaging its readers with thoughtful articles on all aspects of the field of horror in culture and entertainment, you are all doing a magnificent job.

Brooks Waldhart – Vancouver, Washington

I HAD NO INKLING that the legend of Sawney Bean inspired Tim Craven's *The Hills Have Eyes*. That cannibalistic family was prolific, it's hard to believe they killed thousands. Your article *The Highlands Have Eyes* was truly an eye-opener, now I can't wait to see the remake of *The Hills Have Eyes*!

Bret Michael Hodson – Napa, California

I FINALLY got the new issue in the mail the other day and I fucking love the direction the mag is going in. The unexpected is everywhere and it's really working. Joseph Whiteford? Really cool. That *Requiem For a Screen* piece is exactly the sort of thing that never gets properly spotlighted in horror mags and I think there is real interest in this kind of thing. I loved the piece on old-school hor-

ror video games (I totally remember those goofy Atari releases – everyone was trying to find the *TCM* one since it never got into Canadian stores, or at least not Montreal ones) and Chris Alexander's essay on *Sole Survivor* was a real surprise. Keep it up!

Mich Davis – Montreal, Quebec

IN MY OPINION, no other magazine in circulation matches the quality and fun of *Rue Morgue*. I am a supporter of the mom and pop comic shop here in Tampa, Florida – The Comics Club does a great job of getting me my "fix" at the first of every month. Even though Vicky will always preceder my *Rue*, she is one of those people who can't take the geek. I must admit to taking a slight hit of enjoyment at her squaring when she slings me my new issue. I wanted to convey my thanks for making my life a little more exciting with every issue that comes out.

Anthony Murphy – Tampa, Florida

THANK YOU for the feature in your magazine, it means so much to me. It's so exciting to be in a magazine that I've read fervently since I first discovered it about four years ago. Thanks for taking the time to give independent artists a chance to grow through *Rue Morgue*. It made my year.

Joe Whiteford (Harley Poe) – Kokomo, Indiana

THANKS FOR including the article about Joe Whiteford and Harley Poe in *RM54*. It was nice to see the exclusive stuff from the upcoming book *Herschell*. I didn't even know such a thing was in the works. It would be cool to see a review of *The Dead and the Naked* once it is out.

Rohby Walker – Brownshurg, Indiana

I REALLY APPRECIATE the excellent review of my film *Zombie Girlfriend* in the latest issue. You've inspired me to continue on with some more short films.

Pete Zedlacher – Toronto, Ontario



Dreadlines

News Highlights



Horror Happenings

The Godfather of Gore returns with *Grim Fairy Tales*

With a second remake of one of his vintage films currently in production (*The Wizard of Gore*), legendary exploitation filmmaker Herschell Gordon Lewis, has some ideas of his own for new maniacal movies. The controversial director of beloved classics like *Blood Feast*, *Two Thousand Maniacs!* and *The Gruesome Twosome* returned to the director's chair in 2002 after a decades-long absence to make *Blood Feast 2: All U Can Eat*, the outrageous sequel to his 1963 film, and has since been itching to get back behind the camera.

"I have a script which I have been kicking around for some years called *Grim Fairy Tales*," Lewis tells *Rue Morgue* of his next project. "It's about a television program called *Truth or Uh-Oh!* On the show, when the contestant gets the question right they win all kinds of prizes, but if the contestant gets the question wrong... Uh-Oh!"

The typically twisted Lewis premise has the producer of *Truth or Uh-Oh!* creating a nastier show called *Grim Fairy Tales* after the success of his first "reality TV" program. While familiar characters Hansel and Gretel do end up at the witch's house, the story pans out differently from the original fairy tale because, for Lewis, having the story just cook the kids in an oven is far too tame.

"An oven is not visual enough so she rips the heart out of one of them, to start, and it's all done with black humour as usual," he admits with a chuckle.

Grim Fairy Tales is being produced by a Tampa, Florida company called Film State 51, which is also producing a horror-comedy called *Back in Blood* based on characters created by Lewis in various films – Fuad Ramses (*Blood Feast*), Montag the Magnifi-

cent (*Wizard of Gore*), Adam Sarg (*Color Me Blood Red*), and Rodney/Granny Pringle (*The Gruesome Twosome*) will appear together in the upcoming film. The low-budget film company approached Lewis last year at the Chiller Theatre Expo in New Jersey with an option on the *Grim Fairy Tales* script, which they bought and plan to shoot this month, with Lewis directing.

The other original project Lewis hopes to get off the ground is a script called *Mr. Bruce and the Gore Machine* – about a fellow with an unusual weight reduction program – which the director says is "not very serious but contains a lot of gore." *Mr. Bruce* is surprisingly co-scripted by Paul Cloverly, the Editor-in-Chief of *The NonProfit Times*, a respected fundraising magazine.

"I think you're aware I have a schizophrenic kind of life," explains Lewis, who writes regular columns for business magazines and will publish his 30th business-related book this September.

Most horror fans don't know that the Godfather of Gore left the film industry in the '70s to pursue a career in direct marketing – where he has a revered position in the Direct Marketing Association Hall of Fame. And, until the internet exposed him, the two worlds never collided. "I've since quit trying to deny it," admits Lewis, who has yet another wacky treatment floating around called *Horrible Herschell's Hamburger Helper* (as of press time there are no film options on it or *Mr. Bruce*).

With regard to the current remakes of his



H.G. Lewis itching to get back behind a camera.

older films, Lewis – who's either turning 80 or 77 this year (depending on the source) – is surprised there's still so much interest in his work. And though he was disappointed when *Two Thousand Maniacs!* was remade ("It's still my favourite film I've ever done."), he's more open to the Jeremy (*Atrocious Expeditious*) Kastner-helmed retooling of *The Wizard of Gore*, which stars Jeffrey (*Re-Animator*) Combs, Brad (*The Exorcist III*) Dourf, and Crispin (*Willard*) Glover as Montag the Magnificent.

"*Wizard of Gore* was a jinxed picture, it doesn't bother me at all that they're remaking it. Although I was surprised that somebody wanted to. But these same people, I am told, also plan to remake *Shriek-Devs* on *Wheels* [1968]," says Lewis.

As for the possibility of remaking any of his own films, he remarks: "Yeah, I've talked about it, but I'm better off starting with fresh stuff, an original script that I own and can control."

Jovanka Vuckovic

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BRIDE MONSTER

Bousman to push gore boundaries with *Saw III* and *Wichita*

Dreadlines

Oh yes, there will be blood. That's the promise *Saw II* director Darren Lynn Bousman is making for his next two films, *Saw III*, shooting this month in Toronto, followed by *Wichita*, his first project under a two-picture deal with Dimension films.

"*Wichita* is going to push the limits of what people can handle more than any film before it," Bousman states confidently. "The script [by Scott Milam] is one of the most shocking things I've ever read."

Set during the holiday season, the story concerns a singular event which sets in motion the eventual destruction of eight separate people. Although that's as detailed as Bousman will get with the plot at this point, he notes that it's based on real events and isn't easily slotted in any of the usual horror subgenres.

Bousman discovered *Wichita* while hanging out in the office of his "mentor" and producer, the late Greg Hoffman, who had a copy of the script and was lamenting that it was too disgusting to get made. This, of course, piqued Bousman's interest, and at the prompting of Hoffman's assistant he took the script home and quickly read it. That night he told Hoffman he wanted to make the film.

"Horror movies are usually kinda comic book and fun, and not to be taken seriously. This movie, though, is one of those things where it really can happen and really does happen. It's taken out of the news," says Bousman, adding, "After reading it I wanted to shower."

Before tackling *Wichita*, though, Bousman has another *Saw* sequel to direct in time for an October 27, 2006 release. It was the overwhelming success of *Saw II* — a film with a \$4-million budget that earned over \$143 million theatrically worldwide — that ensured another installment in the series. *Saw* creators James Wan and Leigh Whannell will be more involved in part three, crafting both the story and the screenplay. Bousman says the third film significantly ups the graphic horror ante.

"Originally I wasn't interested in coming back to *Saw III*," he admits of the sadistic, trap-filled trilogy. "It was 'been there, done



Director Darren Lynn Bousman bonding on the set of *Saw II*

that" until I saw the script ... it was taking it to the next level, going where these films haven't gone. We're doing some things that are gag-worthy."

It's been a bit of a Cinderella story for the 27-year-old Bousman, who arrived in L.A. six years ago only to find underpaid work in the film industry running errands and reading scripts — most of which were terrible. Extremely frustrated, he funnelled his anger and bitterness into an original script, titled *The Desperate*, that he describes as "a thousand times darker than *Saw II*."

"My goal was to offend everyone," he recalls. "[*The Desperate*] was too violent, too disturbing, too vulgar, whatever."

Bousman was going to raise a million dollars to get the film made, but that all changed when he met David Armstrong, director of photography on *Saw*, at the Sundance Film Festival. Armstrong brought the script to Twisted Pictures (the company behind *Saw*), which hired the rookie filmmaker to tone it

down, turn it into *Saw II* and direct it. Bousman laughs, "It's quite amazing when you consider that I'm just some schmuck from Kansas who wrote a script and wouldn't take no for an answer."

The director, whose love of grindhouse classics like *I Spat On Your Grave*, *Last House on the Left*, and the original *Hills Have Eyes*, now feels that his success has made him part of a cadre of filmmakers playing a kind of aesthetic double-dare with each other.

"There's a new kind of goal for horror filmmakers where everyone tries to outdo the other," he reflects. "*Saw* came out, followed by a slew of horror films capitalizing on that, and then there was *Saw II* and *Wolf Creek*, *Hostel* and *The Hills Have Eyes*. Each film gets progressively more violent and pushes the limits more and more."

Tom Murray

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Artist Jeff Spengler uses a photo manipulation process he calls "trans-morgue-ification" to turn ordinary folks into demons and other nefarious creatures of darkness. Visit his blog to see before and after portraits of his creepy creations, and to submit an image of your own for transfiguration.

www.headlesshorsemen.co.uk

For a more haunting (and haunted) vacation across the pond, check in with this handy guide to all things ghostly in the UK. From haunted railways to restless nuns, this "guide to the world of ghosts" leaves no spook unexamined. Essential for jet-setting ghost hunters.

www.myldevilmwork.com

Make every Friday a frightening one by signing up for free genre fiction at My Devil's Work to have a new terrifying tale delivered directly to your inbox once a week. Short shockers by Weston Ochse, Gerard Houmer and Michelle Scallan have already appeared.

www.helliequis.com

If you're in the market for an old-school monster-themed alarm clock with homemade bat wings attached to it, you'll want to check out Mick Demakes' terrible timepieces here. Yep, time does fly.

www.deadbodygay.com

Chuck Lamb wants to be in movies... as a corpse. To achieve this humble goal, he's launched a website featuring himself "playing dead" in a number of macabre situations. See him crushed beneath a garage door, hung from a cooling fan, and electrocuted in a bathtub. Good luck Chuck!

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Compiled by Monica S. Kuebler

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Niles continues to expand 30 Days of Night universe

The *30 Days of Night* juggernaut keeps on growing as Steve Niles, arguably one of the hardest working men in horror, expands the comic's universe with a new series of novels from Pocket Books. *30 Days of Night*, Niles'

acclaimed vampire title made the leap into literature recently with the release of *30 Days of Night: Rumors of the Undead*, the first book in a three-novel series that Niles is co-writing with Jeff Mariotte, former *30 Days* editor at IDW Publishing.

Rumors spins off from a short story in the first *30 Days of Night* annual, and finds FBI agent Paul Norris not only missing but now a vampire himself. The plot follows Norris' partner Andy Gray as he goes in search of his friend and some answers, essentially discovering that the FBI has known about the existence of vampires all along.

"It's really funny because I remember distinctly, after the first comic series was done, going on my message board and proudly vowing that I would never milk [*30 Days of Night*] and exploit it and do sequels and that kind of stuff because I thought it was too pure an idea," Niles tells *Rue Morgue*. "Once I started doing *Dark Days*, after *30 Days of Night*, I realized that there was so much more to the story than just vampires in Alaska. It seemed that I'd stumbled onto something about vampires that people liked. So I was able to concentrate on just writing about vampires in this universe and use the whole Barrow thing as just one of the events that had happened in the universe."

While *Rumors of the Undead* focuses on telling the tale from a strictly human perspective, the second still-untitled book (out spring 2007) in the series will swap sides and tell the tale from the perspective of one of the lead vamps. The last book will then switch

between the two vantage points. Mariotte is also slated to co-write the second and third installments.

"Jeff and I have this completely casual relationship where I'm not even sure we could pass each other off if we tried," Niles explains of his working dynamic with Mariotte. "We throw the manuscript back and forth, I cut him and he cuts me—whatever. We just want to make the book work, we're really into that idea of creating that third voice."

These novels aren't the only new things poised to come out of the *30 Days of Night* universe. Niles is penning a six-issue miniseries with Kelly Sue DeConnack called *Eben and Stella*, which picks up one page after *Dark Days* ends (no

release date set as of yet for the series), and writer Dan Wickline (*30 Days of Night: Dead Space*) will do a solo *30 Days* story based on some unique ideas about vampire cults.

Additionally, the long-rumored film adaptation of the comic has officially begun pre-production, with David (*Hard Candy*) Slade at the helm.

"He literally made me buckle over and fall out of my chair," says Niles about seeing *Hard Candy*. "I haven't read [the script for *30 Days of Night*] yet, but everybody's been telling me it is the comic book, and as far as I know they'll be shooting in New Zealand. Now I'm just waiting for an actual date."

In addition, this summer/early fall sees Niles' long-running *Criminal Mosaic* title going monthly from Dark Horse Comics; *The Cryptids*, his one-shot for kids that he describes as a "monster version" of Charles Schulz's *Peanuts*, will hit stands in June; and his updated take on the classic DC Comics' title *The Creeper*, will also premiere in a six-issue miniseries.

Monica S. Kuebler



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Weird Stats Morbid Facts

- ✦ After the beheading of Charles I, his head was sewn back on to facilitate the artist painting his portrait.
- ✦ Despite being marketed by American International Pictures as the sixth Roger Corman-directed Edgar Allan Poe-inspired film, *The Hallowed Palace* (1963) was in fact based on the H.P. Lovecraft tale *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*.
- ✦ The gas chamber was first used in America in February of 1924 to carry out the execution of murderer Gee Jon.
- ✦ The 1957 film *El Vampiro* was the first Mexican feature about vampires.
- ✦ After a tidal wave destroyed the city of Galveston, Texas in 1900, killing some 6000 residents, the city was not only rebuilt but raised seventeen feet above sea level.
- ✦ In a 2002 television interview, Bruce Campbell cited *Bubba Ho-Tep* as the "weirdest script" he's ever read.
- ✦ The word "zombie" first appeared in The Oxford English Dictionary in 1819.
- ✦ After being wounded in battle during WWII, Richard Matheson studied journalism at the University of Missouri before setting his sights on fiction.
- ✦ The Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), a military division of the US government, recently requested "innovative proposals to develop technology to create insect-cyborgs."
- ✦ The first female werewolf did not make an appearance in fiction until Victorian times with the Frederick Marryat novel *The Phantom Ship*.
- ✦ The vehicle used to transport criminals to the guillotine was called a tumbril.
- ✦ Actress Helen Chandler (Mina Harker in Tod Browning's *Dracula*) wanted nothing more than to play the title role in *Alice In Wonderland* – a part she eventually lost to Charlotte Henry.
- ✦ The Japanese word "tsuji-giri", coined during the days of the samurai, means "to try out a new sword on a passer-by."

Compiled by Monica S. Koebler
Got a weird stat or morbid fact?
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The Rue Morgue SICK TOP SIX



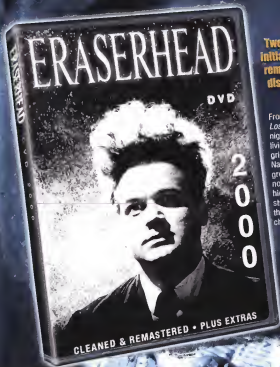
Instances of FACELIFTS



1. *Dagon*
Fish-cult facial
2. *Poltergeist*
Paranormal pluck 'n' peel
3. *Ichi the Killer*
Flying fillet o' face
4. *Katie Bird*
Maniacal mug massacre
5. *Nightbreed*
Emergency room buccal butchery
6. *Onibaba*
Demonic dermal desecration



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The long-awaited Director's Cut of **STUART GORDON's** sexed-up, slime-soaked, Lovecraftian splatterpiece **FROM BEYOND** — containing new material previously excised by the MPAA — premieres next month in high definition on Monsters HD. Gordon tells us the story behind the discovery and restoration of the lost footage.

BACK FROM BEYOND

BY JOSEPH O'BRIEN

For horror fans, the 1960s were the weirdest, wettest decade on record. At the crest of this sensational crimson wave, filmmakers soaked theatre screens around the world with creature features packed with over-the-top practical gore effects. Tom Savini became the genre's first special effects superstar, and for good reason. From *The Thing to Day of the Dead to Hellraiser*, the '80s were a time of latex-filled, bloodsoaked hedonism. Fans cheered, critics were unsure, and censors sharpened their knives.

On the bleeding edge of this bizarre movement was newcomer Stuart Gordon, whose 1985 debut *Re-Animator*, a modernized adaptation H.P. Lovecraft's short story, was a landmark of excess that made an instant genre icon of its star, Jeffrey Combs (see p. 19). Seeking to duplicate its success, Gordon, alongside *Re-Animator* producer Brian Yuzna and screenwriter Dennis Paoli (see sidebar p.20), again turned to the Dark Prince of Providence for a more ambitious follow-up feature. But when their plans for *Dagon*—based on the Lovecraft story *The Shadow Over Innsmouth*—were shot down by Empire Pictures head honcho Charles Band (the project would

finally resurface in 2001), they turned to a much slighter, though no less strange, Lovecraft tale for their next feature: the 1920 short story *From Beyond*.

By far Gordon's most peculiar and complicated adaptation of Lovecraft's work (see *RMP50*, *From Beyond* reunited the director with actors Combs and Barbara Crampton (see p.21), swapping their *Re-Animator* roles as ethically-challenged scientist and traumatized victim, Combs turns in a memorably twitchy performance as Crawford Tillinghast ("I'll slit off his head like... a gingerbread man"), driven to the edge of madness while assisting the sexually deviant Dr. Edward Pretorious (Tod Sorel) in his dimension-bending experiments. Crampton is stretched beyond her soap-opera persona to play Combs' psychiatrist, Dr. Katherine McMichael, who uses her patient to further her own interest in Pretorious' pineal gland-stimulating sonic resonator—a complex, dimension-opening device she soon discovers mutates both mind and body.

Over-the-top cop Buford "Bubba" Brownlee (*Dawn of the Dead*'s Ken Foree) is assigned to watch over both of them, and soon all three find themselves swimming in slippery substances,

confronted not only by the Dali-esque extra-dimensional horrors brought forth by the rapidly-mutating Pretorious, but their own darkest urges, awakened by the sonic resonator, as well. The result was a gleefully grotesque mélange of mad science, kinky sex and sucked-out brains that belongs on every horror fan's must-see list.

Gordon would go on to adapt Lovecraft a total of three more times over the next twenty years, moving from vengeful severed heads and sex-crazed, tentacled terrors to castle freaks and waterlogged gods. But while *Re-Animator* remains a much-loved genre touchstone, the cult of its spiritual cousin *From Beyond* has diminished over time. It was unfairly relegated to also-ran status thanks to a murky full-frame VHS release by Vestron Video and a contractually-obligated R-rating that saw its more outrageous moments (courtesy of Band's go-to goremeister John Carl Buechler) banished to the cutting room floor by the MPAA—whose censorious scissors the unrated *Re-Animator* had dodged a year before. Despite its many strengths, *From Beyond* seemed lost in the shadow of its predecessor.

But last year's shocking discovery of a film can containing the lost footage from the movie has

paved the way for a major reassessment of what, by all rights, should have been a full-fledged horror classic. With the restored, high definition director's cut premiering on June 10th (8:00 PM) on US satellite station Monsters HD (see p.22), Gordon's twisted visions, brought to life courtesy of the outlandish colours and compositions of cinematographer Mac Ahlberg (*Dolls*, *Half Night, House*), will finally get their proper due. In addition, the DVD release scheduled shortly thereafter means that fans will at last be able to add it to their own permanent collections.

Rue Morgue rings Stuart Gordon to talk about his return to Dr. Preloius' house at 666 Benevolent Street, and what long-lost mind-bending horrors he found lurking there.

How did *From Beyond* come about?

Originally we had developed *Dagon* as the film that was going to follow [*Re-Animator*]. We took it to Charlie Band, who had distributed the first film, and he just did not respond to it at all. I think it was Charlie who suggested *From Beyond*. So we sat down and looked at the story, and it was only about eight-pages long. It didn't seem like there was a lot there for a whole movie so what we kind of ended up doing was using the Lovecraft story as the pre-title sequence, and the whole movie was us saying "Well, what could happen next?" We utilized Lovecraft's ideas from other stories, sort of woven together, to create what became the film *From Beyond*.

This was not that long after shooting *Re-Animator*.

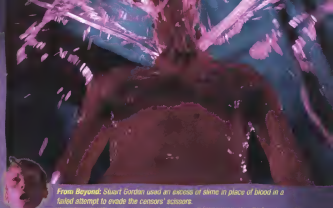
No. It was a year later. When we started talking to Charlie we discovered that not only did he want us to shoot *From Beyond* but he wanted us to shoot in Rome. He had just bought Dino De Laurentiis' studios there. And then there was another project handed to me, *Dolls*, and I learned that he wanted us to shoot them back-to-back on the same sets. We shot *Dolls* first, so the house from *Dolls* then became *From Beyond*'s sets.

And Mac Ahlberg [*Dolls*, *House*, *Shocker*] shot *Re-Animator* and *From Beyond*?

Yeah, he did. Looking at *From Beyond*, the colours in it are very garish. The movie is, I think, visually really stunning. *Re-Animator*'s all about fluorescent, day-glo green, and *From Beyond* is all day-glo greens and purples. Both movies are pretty psychedelic.

Were you influenced by comic books at all?

Very much so. I'm a huge comic book fan. But some of it came from Lovecraft. He talked about being able to see the spectrum, and getting into the violet light, that kind of thing. So we were thinking about black lights and all these other things, and came up with the idea of all these sorts of purples and pinks.



From Beyond: Stuart Gordon used an excess of slime in place of blood in a failed attempt to evade the censors' scissors.

"I asked (the MPAA) what the problem (with *From Beyond*) was and they said 'Everything! This movie is too disturbing, it's too weird and you're never going to get an R.'"

STUART GORDON

Did you set out to make a very graphic film? Was there a conscious attempt to emulate *Re-Animator* in that respect?

What we knew was that we had to get an R-rating, which was different than *Re-Animator*. *Re-Animator* had been released unrated, thank God, because it would have been about twenty minutes long if it had had to get a rating. We thought we were going to be really clever and avoid a lot of blood—we spilled about 30 gallons in *Re-Animator*. So instead we decided that we would have slime. But when we talked to the MPAA they said "No! This is even more disgusting than blood!" [laughs]. So that didn't really help us much.

The two films are obviously compared a lot. Do you think that *From Beyond* has fallen into the shadow of *Re-Animator* at all?

Well it has. I think people thought it didn't go as far as *Re-Animator*, partially because it got trimmed back so far by the MPAA.

Is it too surreal for the average horror fan?

I think it's more complicated than *Re-Animator*. *Re-Animator*'s idea is a very simple one. *From Beyond* is a little more complicated in terms of the idea that there are all these things that are out there that we cannot normally see.

Why did you decide to sexualize the film, considering that Lovecraft tended to avoid sexuality in his stories?

Well I don't agree with that, actually. I think that Lovecraft's all about sex. All of his stories, he writes about these couplings between non-human lifeforms and giving birth to all these monstrosities. There's a very strong sexual subtext in almost everything he wrote. What is true is that Lovecraft did not go into graphic detail describing sex, although in stories like *The Dunwich Horror* he does, talking about sacrificing the woman at the top of the hill and this thing raping her and so forth. When Lovecraft does it he sort of shows the results of all of this. But in movies you have to show things, you can't just talk about them. In *From Beyond* we got into this thing about it being a very phallic movie. As a matter of fact there's a game that we used to play, "Can you count all the penises? How many penises are there?" All the way from the snake to the pineal gland. There's even a flag in one of the rooms, the "Don't Tread On Me" flag with a snake on it. It's a dick movie, really [laughs].

What did the MPAA think of all this after you submitted the film to them?

It was a torturous process. I think we must have submitted the movie a dozen times. And the first



The censored eyeball spit-brain suck scene is restored in the Director's Cut.

time they saw it they said "There's absolutely no way in hell we're going to give this an R-rating." I asked them what the problem was and they said "Everything! This movie is too disturbing. It's too weird and you're never going to get an R." And then we had them see it a few more times and they starting getting more specific. I kept appealing, but they didn't have NC-17 at the time, so this was going to be an X-rated movie. I finally asked for a meeting with the MPAA. I went in there and met with this woman who I think was a retired librarian or something, and she sat down and scolded me for an hour. Talking about some of the shots, I still remember her saying, "A shot like this you should be panning away, instead you're pushing in and pushing in and pushing in!" I felt like I was being called to the principal's office. I had the feeling, I don't know, that they were trying to get their revenge on us with *From Beyond* because on *Re-Animator* we had sort of sidestepped them. I think their noses were out of joint about that.

Did they soften over time?

No. They kept chopping and chopping. We got to the point where we were fighting over frames.

How did you feel a year or so ago when you first learned about the discovery of the deleted footage?

I was absolutely amazed. One of the questions I get asked every time I go to a horror convention or a film festival is "When are you going to do a director's cut of *From Beyond*?" I was looking for that material. I even went to a warehouse once and was rummaging through all these boxes of stuff and I was told that all of that material had been thrown away, that the only thing left was the original interpositive and internegative. All of the outtakes, everything, had been just tossed in the trash. So that's what I believed for twenty years, until I got this call from MGM saying they'd

found a film can and would I come down and identify it. It was kind of like going to the morgue or something. So there was this film can and a little note written on it saying, "FOR THE VIDEO RELEASE." And I opened it up and there were all the trims that our editor, Lee Percy, had put aside.

He had saved them?

Yeah. It was funny, because now, there are no more workprints, it's a process that doesn't happen anymore because everyone edits digitally now. But in those days you literally had little snippets of film cut off from the workprint and strips of mag to go along with it for the sound. Some of them were pretty short, but other ones are pretty extensive. There's one sequence that was really butchered that I think was the strongest sequence in the whole film, and there it all was. I was just amazed and elated. It was incredible. It was like a miracle. MGM looked at it and said there was no way this was going to match with the other stuff. It's scotchited, it's got grease pencil marks on it. It was nowhere near the quality of the pristine, beautiful release print that they had. What we were able to do then was restore it. Because of the advances that have been made digitally in terms of cleaning up prints and so forth, we were able to get it to the level of the rest of the movie.

Can you give us a quick walk-through of the new material, and tell us how much new footage there is?

I think the total amount of new footage is about two minutes that was cut. But it's really interesting, adding what, in some cases, was just a few feet of film, it makes a really big difference. The main sequence is the murder of my wife's character, Dr. Bloch, who has her brain sucked

through her eye socket. That was very very truncated by the MPAA. In the original version, what was intended is that you see Jeffrey Combs suck her eyeball out and spit out the eyeball on the floor. And the eyeball lands on the ground and kind of looks up at the camera. And we lost the whole thing. ... There's also an extended sequence where Barbara Crampton has her clothes torn off by Dr. Pretorius and he's fondling her breasts. What was cut is his hand disappears down below the frame line and he's groping her with these extended fingers of his. Again, more penises!

So even the suggestion of something offensive had to go?

Right. It was just too much. And when Jeffrey Combs kills a woman ambulance driver, he hits her head against the pavement. In the release print he hits her once, now he hits her three times. It's much more savage. The other thing that was done when we restored the movie was we had to redo all the sound for those sequences. The sound people had a good time with some of that stuff. You really hear her skull cracking. They had to really create a lot of new sound, especially for that brain-sucking sequence. And they had to re-edit the music to make it all fit. But it's all pretty seamless, I have to say.

How did the deal with *Monsters HD* come about?

MGM saw the workprint and kind of threw their hands up and said, "This is going to be impossible to restore. What we'll do is we'll put these on as extras on the DVD." And I told them I thought they were really missing a great opportunity. Even if the stuff doesn't look as good as the release print, it's still worth doing so you can get a sense of what the original intentions of the film were. And at that point, *Monsters HD* had made a deal to show *From Beyond* and they'd heard about the new material. I got a call from them saying "What would it take for you to create a director's cut?" And I explained it all, and they said it sounded like something they would like to



JEFFREY COMBS is most often recognized for his role as Dr. Herbert West, but it was his watershed performance as Dr. Crawford Tillinghast in *FROM BEYOND* that cemented him as a genre icon.

THE MAD SCIENCE OF JEFFREY COMBS

BY DAVE ALEXANDER

When interviewing Jeffrey Combs over the phone, it's easy to forget the actor isn't really Doctor Herbert West, the mad scientist character that made him famous in Stuart Gordon's Lovecraft-inspired *Re-Animator*. Like West, Combs enunciates everything clearly and confidently, talking about his films with the same slightly nasal, matter-of-fact tone the mariscal academic uses to explain the nuances of resurrecting a corpse. Both men are also easily exasperated when discussing the marginalized nature of their work. While chatting about *From Beyond*, the newly resurrected follow-up to *Re-Animator*, it's clear that Combs is most like West in that neither suffer fools gladly.

"Most horror movies, man, are geared for young kids," sighs the 51-year-old, frustration creeping into his voice. "They don't have to be, because some of the greatest movies ever are not dealing with a bunch of teenagers running around and how to figure out which ones are gonna die and how. 'Is this the one with the spike through the head, or...?' To me it's all so friggin' boring. At least in *From Beyond* you didn't know what was going on, or what was going to happen next. And that's what you want with a movie—not to know the formula, to be caught off guard, to go, 'Whoa! This is going somewhere I didn't expect.'"

After *Re-Animator* became a surprise B-movie splatter sensation, Gordon regrouped much of that film's team for another bizarre Lovecraftian misadventure, but this time Combs had to play shell-shocked, fragile Crawford Tillinghast, the opposite of the cunning, witty West. Not surprisingly, Combs says this reinvention was one of the most difficult aspects of shooting *From Beyond*.

"In *Re-Animator*, Herbert sort of had the clever lines, and had the driving need to do what he had

to do," he explains. "In *From Beyond* I was more like the Dan Cain character, more passive and more of a victim. Humour would be kind of inappropriate, so I had to just play it straight ahead. He's an assistant to the mad doctor, kind of like [the character of] Dan Cain is an assistant to Herbert West. He's the victim. In all this, he's reacting to everything that's going on around him and rises to the occasion to try to save somebody at the end. It's kind of like, okay, you played the violin, now you have to play the cello."

On a physical level, *From Beyond* was also a challenge for Combs, who spent most of the eight-week shoot buried under makeup and prosthetics—noticeably a bald cap with a bloody worm-like probe embedded in it. It was a far cry from the West wardrobe: little more than a lab coat and a sneer. Combs welcomed the change, though, explaining, "Prosthetics can free you up, actually, and inform you, and take you in directions that you hadn't necessarily thought of."

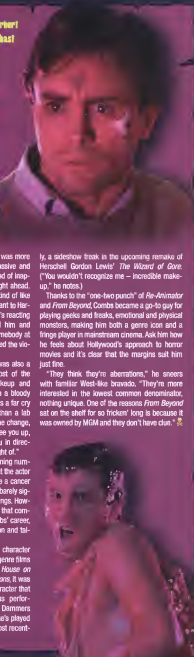
In a film celebrated for its overwhelming number of wild splatter effects, the fact that the actor spends much of the movie looking like a cancer patient with a forehead phallus seems barely significant in the great gory scheme of things. However, *From Beyond* is arguably the film that completed the template for the rest of Combs' career, demonstrating his knack for reinvention and talent for emotional extremes.

While the disturbingly clinical West character clearly led to unhinged doctor roles in genre films like *Lurking Fear*, *Time Tracers*, the *House on Haunted Hill* remake and *Amc Expeditions*, it was the emotional, mutated Tillinghast character that prepared Combs for more infamous performances like the crazed Special Agent Dammers in *The Frighteners*, the various aliens he's played in different *Star Trek* TV series, and, most recent-

ly, a sideshow freak in the upcoming remake of Herschel Gordon Lewis' *The Wizard of Gore*. ("You wouldn't recognize me—incredible make-up," he notes.)

Thanks to the "one-two punch" of *Re-Animator* and *From Beyond*, Combs became a go-to guy for playing geeks and freaks, emotional and physical monsters, making him both a genre icon and a fringe player in mainstream cinema. Ask him how he feels about Hollywood's approach to horror movies and it's clear that the margins suit him just fine.

"They think they're aberrations," he sneers with familiar West-like bravado. "They're more interested in the lowest common denominator, nothing unique. One of the reasons *From Beyond* sat on the shelf for so friggin' long is because it was owned by MGM and they don't have clue." 🐛



BEYOND THE PAGE

Meet *From Beyond* scribe and long-time Stuart Gordon collaborator, screenwriter Dennis Paoli. Having penned *Re-Animator*, *Castle Freak*, *Dagon*, and the *Masters of Horror* episode *Dreams in The Witch-House*, he's a genuine expert at crafting Lovecraftian helms for the screen.

How did you get hooked up with Stuart Gordon?

We went to high school together and were college roommates. We performed together in a professional comedy/satire group in high school and college, worked in theatre together at the University of Wisconsin, and I did some writing with his theatre company in Chicago, the Organic Theater.

How did you approach this script differently than *Re-Animator*?

Because of *Re-Animator*, the production company wanted the same thing, except without the gore and humour. Yeah, right. Or rather, they wanted the gore, but not the blood. Yeah, sure. So we substituted slime, as an inter-dimensional lubricant. And of course, we found the humour in going over the top.

What were the challenges of adapting and extrapolating Lovecraft's tale?

Lovecraft in some ways adapts quite well to low budgets because many of his stories have few characters on which they focus, and a strong sense of place, which translates well to the medium. And in some ways his work is impossible to adapt because it depends so much on literary effects, and because his imagination was huge. Multiple dimensions, interplanetary aggression, unimaginable monstrosities - this is tough stuff to get on the screen.

Do you have a favourite scene in the film?

The [re-discovered] brain-eating/eyeball scene. It's disgusting and funny.

Was there anything you originally envisioned that didn't make it into the film?

There was a whole running portion of the script that crossed over into another Lovecraftian dimension and showed that dimension visually, which was cut. We showed the effects of the other dimension, the intrusions of its life forms, but not its physical, spatial properties. [We] couldn't afford to build another dimension.

So, what do you do when not envisioning Lovecraftian helms?

I run several academic programs on writing, teach Gothic and Irish literature, and envision other helms.

Dave Alexander



Ken Foree gets eaten alive by an inter-dimensional swarm, and (below) Ted Sorel mutates

finance. So they stepped in and paid for the restoration, or at least split the cost with MGM. I'm not exactly sure what the financial arrangements were.

Was there any additional footage you found that you decided not to put back in?

Not really. Everything we found we put in. Some of it was little stuff, but it made a big difference. There's the whole scene where Dr. Bloch is examining Jeffrey Combs' pineal gland thing and is trying to grab it with her forceps. That was originally just very, very brief, but now it's a much more extended sequence and is just very creepy, I think.

What was your reaction seeing the film in high definition?

It was really beautiful, I was knocked out by how terrific it looked. Really sharp, with a lot of detail, things you just haven't been able to see before. *From Beyond* had been relegated to VHS, and I think that by the end they were putting out really crappy copies of it, on SLP tapes, so you didn't get to see anything that resembled the movie, really.

Has the high definition transfer revealed anything to you, good or bad?

There are always things that you look at and say, "Gosh, I would have done that a little differently." There's one sequence, I don't know if people will even pick up on this, where Ken Foree tackles Jeffrey Combs and they tumble down a flight of stairs. We had stuntmen do that, and the guy that was doubling Ken Foree was a white guy - we had painted him, darkened his skin. So when he hits the wall you see these brown smudges appear. So sometimes you see a little more than you want to.

I don't think people notice that because they're too distracted

by Ken Foree's red skivvies. Whose idea was that?

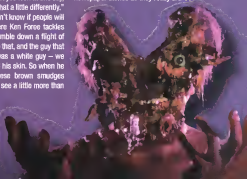
You know, I don't know. I'm going to say it was Ken's idea. He was a very game character.

Has anyone approached you about a remake of *From Beyond*?

I haven't heard anything about a remake, but when we were making the film we kept talking about doing a sequel to it, and I'd still like to do that sequel.

Now that you've finally completed the director's cut of *From Beyond*, what's next for you?

There's a project called *Stuck* that I'm casting right now, which is based on a true story about a woman who hits a homeless man, he bounces up through her windshield. And rather than take him to the hospital she parks the car in her garage and keeps coming in to check on him to see if he's died yet. And I'm going to be doing another *Masters of Horror* episode, Edgar Allan Poe's *The Black Cat*. We've got Jeffrey Combs lined up to play Edgar Allan Poe. I've also been working on the script for *House of Re-Animator*. It takes place in the White House. Somebody asked me, "So you're going to say that the United States is run by a mindless zombie?" Though I don't know if we can get much weirder than the newspaper stories as they really are. ☺



Being covered in more slime than clothing is all in a day's work for *FROM BEYOND* star BARBARA CRAMPTON, whose reputation as Stuart Gordon's favourite victim has earned her the title...

THE FIRST LADY OF LOVECRAFT

BY DAVE ALEXANDER

When Stuart Gordon gets together with H.P. Lovecraft, more often than not it means Barbara Crampton is going to get molested by a monster. The filmmaker's first three Lovecraft-inspired films — *Re-Animator*, *From Beyond* and *Castle Freak* — saw the actress orally displeased by the disembodied head of an undead evil scientist, felt up by slime-drenched abomination from another dimension, and offering herself to a horny, disfigured mutant.

"I like playing extreme characters; that's why I like working with Stuart," Crampton explains from her home in California. "What's unique in any of Stuart Gordon's movies, and particularly in [*From Beyond*] — a lot of people focus on blood and guts and the disastrous things that happen, but in a Stuart Gordon movie you're always going to get good characters no matter what happens to them. You're always going to have characters that have multi-levels to them. I think that's a more rewarding film experience to watch."

In *From Beyond* Crampton plays Dr. Katherine McMichael, an uptight, obsessive scientist helping in a murder investigation involving a machine that opens a door to another dimension, one inhabited by a grotesque monstrosity fused to a sexually sadistic mad scientist. When her character reopens the portal, she's overcome with a drug-like addiction to explore her repressed desires, eventually donning a dominatrix outfit and winding up in the gooey embrace of the horrible creature.

"Stuart was always asking for 'More blood, more blood, more blood!' Every time there was a wound, a slash, a bite, it was 'More blood,'" Crampton recalls, adding, "Being covered in slime was cold, uncomfortable and just kinda gross at times — it wasn't really fun. Being a dominatrix was fun, I thoroughly enjoyed that. It's scary, to put yourself out there, to let people see that side of you on a personal level, but it's also really liberating to do that."

Although the role made her a Lovecraftian Scream Queen — something the 43-year-old still relishes and encourages by making semi-regular convention appearances — the bulk of her acting work (with the notable exception of a role in David DeCoteau's teen vampire movie *The Sisterhood*) over the past decade has been on network dramas, including a recurring job on the soap opera *The Young and the Restless*. Her time is now mainly devoted to family life, but she says she'd jump at the chance to work with Gordon again. Oddly enough, because he's a control freak.

"If Stuart could play every part in the movie, he would," she laughs, "because he has a very clear vision about how he wants everything, and I think that comes from his theatre background. He really lives all the characters and gets into the minds of all the characters. He watches every millimetre, every moment of your performance and is always talking to you about it, so you really feel like you're collaborating on something."

During the interview Crampton is constantly

tending to her two young children while putting away groceries. It's tough to imagine this domestic diva in a G-string, slime-basted and slugging it out with an extra-dimensional sex offender. But if there is a sequel to *From Beyond*, which Gordon would like to do (see interview, p.16), Crampton, a self-described "exhibitionist", says she'd wade back into the *From Beyond* universe in a second — cold poop be damned.

"When are you ever going to experience a creature like in *From Beyond* with disgusting slime wrapped around your neck? I mean, c'mon, that's right up there with *Fear Factor* and having worms all over your face. If we want to experience as much as we can in life, let's experience it all, from the good to the bad to the ugly to the disgusting to the beautiful — I got to play it all." ☛



Barbara Crampton gets a Lovecraftian workout in the Director's Cut of *From Beyond*

Tune in to **MONSTERS HD**, television's first and only 24-hour high def horror channel.

HIGH DEFINITION HORROR

BY JOVANKA VUCKOVIC



Amidst a tangle of recent rumours regarding the supposed launch of several different 24-hour horror channels, somehow we've failed to notice a bona fide beast breathing right under our very noses. Monsters HD, the world's first and only true high definition horror and creature feature channel launched back in October of 2003 as one of VODM HD Networks' diverse suite of specialized high def carriers (which includes everything from fine art and video games to Kung Fu and fashion). Since then, the channel has been broadcasting a wide range of beloved classics like *The Evil Dead*, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *Tombs of the Blind Dead*, *Madman*, *Psychomania*, *The Tinger*, *Abominable Dr. Phibes*, *Scanners*, *Curse of the Demon* — you name it — all presented in 5.1 sound, uncut and completely commercial-free.

Being that HD is a burgeoning technology, it's easy to see how horror fans might have missed

it. Now in their third year of broadcasting, Monsters HD is finally starting to get noticed thanks in part to a recent agreement with EchoStar's DISH Network (where Monsters HD now calls channel 9481 home), which provides HD signals through satellite all over the United States. Although HD is still relatively new to consumers, Grey Moyer, General Manager of VODM HD Networks assures us that it won't be long before it's standard in most households.

"HD TV is the way TV is going to be judged in the future," says Moyer, who oversees operations of all fifteen VODM channels. "It's sort of like the transition from black and white to colour back in the early '60s. It's now beginning to be introduced literally on every continent around the world over the next several months. It will be a transition that will take five to ten years to fully implement itself." He estimates that in the United States roughly 16 million of 105 million television-viewing homes have a high definition set

and expects that number to rise to 40 million within three years.

For those who are completely unfamiliar with the concept of HD, on the technical side, the signal being transmitted from VODM contains 1080 lines of resolution, which is, "roughly two to five times the amount of a DVD, and fully five times more information than a standard broadcast picture", according to Moyer. In other words, bigger picture, bigger sound, bigger horror-viewing experience. The main selling point is that it's like having a movie theatre in your own living room.

Monsters HD is not terrestrially transmitted, so in order to get the channel, consumers have to subscribe to a cable or satellite HD package, which often contains a retransmission of local broadcasters' signals as well as a handful of HD channels, sometimes at a price comparable to that of average cable TV. (Currently DISH Network in America is the only carrier providing VODM HD channels.) Unfortunately the DISH

Network is not currently licensed to operate in Canada, so Monsters HD the channel is technically not available to Canadians, but Moyer offers a glimmer of hope.

"We're optimistic that we're going to find a way to license our Monsters channel to a Canadian distributor within the next year or so," he says. "Part of what we have to navigate is the different approaches to the CRBC that we are currently exploring."

The all-horror all-the-time channel had been a project that was in fact incubated for many years under the AMC (American Movie Classics) umbrella—a standard definition network in over 80 million American TV homes. One of its long-running stunts, curated by dyed-in-the-wool horror fan David Serling, was to do a series of horror/monster titles that would air around Halloween called *Monster Fest*.

"David has always advocated that what worked at Halloween could also work the rest of the year," explains Moyer. "He was the impetus behind building *Monster Fest* into *Monsters HD* and it's been under his guidance ever since."

After moving to VCOM, Serling brought with him all of the licenses and global rights to horror films that he'd acquired over the years at AMC, and his dreams of programming a 24-hour horror channel soon became a reality.

"*Monsters HD* started out because I was a fan of the horror genre and the late-night creature features," Serling tells *Rue Morgue* from the *Monsters HD* New York broadcast centre. "I've wanted to program horror movies since I can remember. I was born and bred on *Chiller Theatre*, the Universal classics, the Aurora monster models; I used to have friends over doing little shows with my 8mm projector with the Castle films. Today, I now have the rights to the largest collection of horror films in HD, bar none."

Serling's not exaggerating either, he's managed to secure licensing deals with all the major studios—Paramount and their franchises, MGM (which includes the AP drive-in classics from Roger Corman to Samuel Arkoff), New Line's (post-Paramount) *Friday* the 13th movies as well as *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, the Universal classics, Sony/Columbia's Harryhausen films; everything from *Scream*, *Blade*, *Scream 2*, to *The Thing With Two Heads* and even oddball titles like *Octoman* and Joe Giannone's *Madman*. They've also aired the world television premiere of *Bubba Ho-Tep*, have exclusive rights to Stuart Gordon's *From Beyond The Director's Cut* (see cover story) and have recently struck a deal with Lionsgate for the TV premiere of Christopher Smith's *Creep* this October (see sidebar for other upcoming programming highlights).

"Our mandate is to bring these beloved movies into a new light with high definition," Serling promises. "We spend a lot of time re-transferring these films to present them in a format that's not available anywhere. Frankly, half

"There's a 24-hour channel for sports fans, so why not one for horror fans?"

JASON BYLAN, CREATIVE DIRECTOR



of these films aren't even on DVD yet, so to see them restored and including additional footage—they just look spectacular."

In addition to showing movies 24/7, *Monsters HD* also produces its own original programming, including an interstitial segment called *Masters of Gore*, which showcases memorable scenes from grue-soaked classics.

"We also have a series called *Monstera-za*, which focuses on everything from effects studios to collectors to people who just love the genre," says Serling. "We did a piece on KLIB, Stan Winston, highlighted [well-known collector] Bob Burns' memorabilia museum, visited Hugh Hefner's annual Halloween party [with Elvira hosting], and we've also done behind-the-scenes stuff—[Creative director] Jason [Bylan] went off to Toronto to shoot *Land of the Dead* material with Roy Fumkes—and we also do interviews with celebrities talking about their inspirations."

But Serling and Bylan, who commissioned genre artist Bernie Wrightson to design their EC Comics-style image spots and brand, say further expansion is in the works.

"We definitely plan on doing more original productions, whether it's series, miniseries, shorts or feature films," Bylan reveals. "We've been in

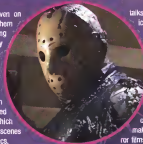
talks with all sorts of genre icons like George Romero, Stuart Gordon, Brian Yuzna, etc., to make original movies with us and shoot them in HD." Serling adds: "Since we are uncut, we also have these pockets we call interstitials, or filler, that we think could be a great opportunity for young filmmakers to showcase short horror films in HD. We're encouraging them to present their work to us—animated or live action—for consideration for these slots."

Being lifelong genre fans, the brain trust at *Monsters HD* understand the needs of horror fanatics and fully intend to make *Monsters HD* a one-stop multimedia horror outlet ("much

like your magazine," Serling notes). Future programming plans also include shows on high definition horror video games, horror music, haunted attraction features and even a daily news segment.

"We're a forum for horror fans," says Bylan. "We're filling a need that no one else has ever provided. There's a 24-hour channel for sports fans, so why not one for horror fans?"

To check out this month's programming schedule and to find out how to subscribe, visit monstershd.com.



TV TERROR GUIDE

MONSTERS HD

RUE MORCUE
presents a sneak
peek at some
programming
highlights coming
to get you on
MONSTERS HD.

MAY

MONSTERS MOTWIE'S DAY

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JUNE 10, 8PM

WORLD PREMIERE

The restored Director's Cut of Stuart Gordon's *From Beyond*.

JULY

STOP MOTION MONSTER MANIA

One Million Years B.C., *When Dinosaurs Ruled the Earth*, *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms*, *The Giant Behemoth*, *Q: The Winged Serpent*, *The Crater Lake Monster*, *The Black Scorpion*, *Golden Voyage of Sinbad*, *Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger*, *King Kong*, *Son of Kong*, *Mighty Joe Young*.

AUGUST

UNIVERSAL MONSTER MARATHON

Frankenstein, *Bride of Frankenstein*, *Son of Frankenstein*, *Dracula* (1931), *The Mummy* (1932), *The Mummy's Hand*, *The Mummy's Curse*, *The Mummy's Ghost*, *The Mummy's Tomb*, *The Wolfman*, *Frankenstein Meets the Wolfman*, *House of Dracula*, *House of Frankenstein*, *Creature From the Black Lagoon*, *Revenge of the Creature*, *The Creature Walks Among Us*.

JWSFEST

Jaws, *Jaws 2*, *Jaws 3-D*, *Jaws: The Revenge*.

SEPTEMBER

ZOMBIETHON

Night of the Living Dead, *Dawn of the Dead*, *Day of the Dead*, *Dead Alive*, *Dead Heat*, *The Evil Dead*, *The Ghoul*, *Tombs of the Blind Dead*, *Return of the Blind Dead*, *Ghost Ships of the Blind Dead*, *Return of the Living Dead Part II*, *Return of the Living Dead III*, *Sugar Hill*, *House of 1000 Corpses*.

OCTOBER

WORLD TELEVISION PREMIERE

Christopher Smith's British subway-mutant thriller *Creep*.

NOVEMBER

MONSTERS GOES APE

King Kong (1933), *Son of Kong*, *Mighty Joe Young*, *Mighty Peeking Man*, *King Kong* (1976).

CHILDREN OF THE CORN WEEK

Children of the Corn, *Children of the Corn 2: Final Sacrifice*, *Children of the Corn 3: Urban Harvest*, *Children of the Corn 5: Fields of Terror*, *Children of the Corn 6: Isaac's Return*, *Children of the Corn 7: Revelation*.

DECEMBER

VAMPIRE BATTY NEW

YEAR'S MARATHON

Dracula (1931), *The Lost Boys*, *Vamp*, *Fright Night*, *Blacula*, *Scream Blacula Scream*, *Blood of Dracula*, *Blood of the Vampire*, *Subspecies*, *Bloodstone: Subspecies 2*, *Bloodlust: Subspecies 3*, *From*

Dusk Till Dawn 3: The Hangman's Daughter, *Count Yorga*, *Vampire*, *The Playgirls and the Vampires*, *Slaughter of the Vampires*, *House of Dracula*.

CHRISTMAS

KILLER TOY STORIES

Child's Play, *Child's Play 2*, *Puppetmaster*, *Puppetmaster II*, *Puppet Master III: Toulon's Revenge*, *Puppetmaster 4*, *Puppetmaster 5: The Final Chapter*, *Devil Doll*. ☞



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A long-awaited art book from Vanguard Productions celebrates the fantastic creature-filled career of **BASIL GOGOS**.

MASTER OF THE MONSTERS

BY JOVANKA VUCKOVIC



**"OUT OF ALL THE
COMMERCIAL ART
AREAS I'VE WORKED
IN, THE MONSTERS
ARE THE BEST
BECAUSE I AM THEIR
SOLE CREATOR,
THEIR MASTER."**

BASIL GOGOS



In the world of contemporary horror art there are few works more revered and coveted than a Basil Gogos painting. Best known for his work on James Warren's *Famous Monsters* magazine, Gogos revolutionized the use of colour in a world where black and white was the medium of monster movies. His creatures were respectfully rendered in the darkest of shadow and boldest of colours, which breathed new life into their deformed and hideous faces. Many of the Gogos covers sold out in record time, and though his work for *FM* was sometimes sporadic, he became the magazine's star illustrator – unparalleled by any artist that followed.

Despite his equally exceptional work for Warren's other publications (*Creeper*, *Eerie*, *Spacemen* and *Wildest West-ems*), it was Gogos' monsters that made him legend. His first assignment for *FM* was in 1958, a regal portrait of Vincent Price (from Roger Corman's *Fall of the House of Usher*), that was later used for *FM* No. 9.

During his decades-long tenure at the ultimate monster magazine for kids, Gogos brushed to life an unequalled body of portraits that includes Oliver Reed in *Curse of the Werewolf*, the British lizard monster Gorgo, Lon Chaney in both *London After Midnight* and *The Phantom of the Opera*, TV horror host Zacherley, Basil Rathbone, Peter Lorre, Elsa Lanchester in *The Bride of Frankenstein*, Boris Karloff from *Frankenstein*, Fredric March in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Christopher Lee in *The Curse of Frankenstein*, Peter Cushing as Professor Van Helsing in *Dracula A.D.*, Louis Hayward in *The Son of Dr. Jekyll* and so on.

Gogos "The Great" also created genre film posters (including Sergio Martino's *They're Coming to Get You* and two Paul Naschy-led pictures), a series of movie monster stamps for the US Postal Service that would go unused, a line of Topps trading cards, covers to the short-lived *Monster-scene* magazine (such as Ingrid Pitt from *The Vampire Lovers* on issue No.

8, pictured above), and even painted album art for horror rock CDs – most notably Rob Zombie's *Hellbilly Deluxe* and several works for The Misfits. Of course, he's also a fine artist and wildlife painter but Gogos' legacy will always remain with his beloved monsters (some of which are available in print from basilgogos.com).

A new book titled *Famous Monster Movie Art of Basil Gogos* (Vanguard Productions) celebrates the eclectic and enduring career of the most acclaimed film monster artist of our time. The tome, compiled by Kerry Gammill and J. David Spurlock, and introduced by Rob Zombie, is the first collection of its kind, compiling 160 pages of gorgeous full-colour Gogos art, along with essays and quotes from Roger Corman to founding *FM* Editor-in-Chief Forrest J. Ackerman. The book is available in softcover (with the

London After Midnight image) and hardcover (with the *Phantom of the Opera* image), as well as in a deluxe, signed, slipcased limited edition with sixteen bonus pages (available exclusively from the publisher at creativemx.com/basilgogos). It's the coffee-table art book the wide-eyed monster kid and art appreciator in all of us have been waiting for.

Rue Morgue looks back on 48 years of monster magic with the inimitable Basil Gogos.





Were you always a horror fan?

No, I liked horror like every boy would but I wasn't a fanatic. I did like monsters but that's not why I got into doing monster portraits. That happened kind of by accident.

How exactly did you come to work for [Famous Monsters of Filmland publisher] James Warren?

What happened was, he had an artist, Albert Nuetzell, who did the first several issues, with the exception of the first issue, of course.

Which was Jim Warren in a rubber mask, right?

That's exactly true; it was an economical decision. After that he had this other man doing the covers and it so happens he died and Jim needed an artist, so he called my agent. He didn't know me at all, and asked him if he knew anyone who could do a portrait in a funny, well, not funny, but strange way – psychedelic to be exact. My agent, who had a few artists under his belt, thought of me. He called and said he had a job for me but it had to be done in a "strange and unusual way with crazy colours, can you do it?" I didn't know how to do it but I said I'd try it and I took the job. I was too embarrassed to take [the finished painting] in, [my agent] was too embarrassed to take it in, but finally he agreed to take it in and

Jim Warren saw it and just fell in love with it. That began a romance between us that lasted about 25 years.

Tell me about creating that first Vincent Price cover for FMI No. 9?

Because it had to be different I thought I'd do it in a manner that I'd never used before, so I used Dr. Marten's dyes. I washed a few colours over some outlines and it was really beautiful because it was fully transparent. What I didn't know at the time was that the dyes bled through any other colour, so I put a few opaques on it and the inks literally bled right through the paint. It was photographed and it lasted long enough but then after a while it

started to fade, dyes faded away. Today, maybe ten percent of it is visible. It really doesn't exist anymore, it just faded away.

Being that many of these classic movie monsters were black and white, how did you go about giving them new life using colour?

I live in colour. I prefer to work from a black and white photograph simply because I don't want to be influenced by anybody else's colour or the chemistry of the film, what have you. I'd rather create my own colours. I can stare at a black and white picture for the longest time and strangely enough, in my mind's eye, I begin to see the colour. And the most interesting part is that the way I envisioned it to look like in my head is always the way it turns out, which I'm very proud of.

Do you have a favourite monster portrait you've done?

Yes I do, it's *FM* No. 56, which is Boris Karloff. When he died I was asked to do a portrait of him, which I did in oil. It was so special to me and I felt so bad that he died that I put a candle behind him, and that's what helped make it stand out. Incidentally I do own it. It's as fresh as the day I painted it.

Dorian Gray [FM No. 60] was also a beautiful cover, and he looks a little like Edgar Allan Poe.

Ah, Dorian Gray! I didn't realize how difficult a painting it was until someone asked me to copy it in black and white. My God it was a lot of work – endless! I've always loved Dorian Gray too. Another one I like is Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

Frederic March, FM No. 62.

You got it, that's the one. Again, I had to repaint that one for someone and I realized how much work it was.

So you've done recreations of those original Famous Monsters paintings for collectors?

Well people want to have an image of it, yes, so I'll repaint it, why not? I always paint them so there's no conflict of interest.

You seem to really understand your subjects, they communicate something to the viewer that perhaps wasn't there in the first place. Does that come from an interest in the characters?

Yes, definitely. It comes from a pathos for the creature. Creatures to me are helpless, vulnerable, sometimes innocents. We may enter their world, and to us they're ferocious killing machines, but in reality they're not because we are invading their world. As we do so we take a chance because these creatures have to defend themselves, and when they do that, we get angry and we kill them. They can't help themselves so I



Opposite page: Cover illustration for *Monsterscene* No. 3 of Christopher Lee in the 1957 Hammer film *Horror of Dracula* (acrylic, 1994). Above (clockwise): Basil Gogos' first Famous Monsters cover illustration (*FM* No. 58) of Vincent Price from the 1960 film *The Fall of the House of Usher*. Cover of *FM* No. 60 featuring Dorian Gray. The Creature From The Black Lagoon from an unidentified person's collection.



Above (clockwise): A menacing portrait of Vincent Price in House of Wax for the cover of Famous Monsters No. 64 (acrylic, 1970). Cover of Rob Zombie's Helibilly Deluxe CD (acrylic, 1998). Portrait of the 'Mastiffs' mascot for the CD American Psycho (acrylic, 1997).

always try to give the creatures a sort of helplessness in my portraits. I make sure that when you look at them you feel how helpless they are. I'm glad you think it shows in my work because I mean to make that statement every time I paint a creature.

After many years of commercial illustration you decided to return to fine art school. Why? That's right, I did go back to school because I was over-influenced by the commercial aspect of illustrating. In other words, illustration is something that tells a story but it may not be quite finished. Illustration is an impression, it has its own effect, it can be sparkling, but not finished – as long as it tells the story. So this was crossing over into my fine art. I did much more than just monster portrait illustrations and I didn't want my fine art to suffer for it so I stopped and went back to square one.

You returned to your beloved monsters in the mid-'90s. What brought you back to horror?

When I do a monster portrait for a magazine or a client, I am the art director, I am the producer, I am the designer – I am everything. The colours that you see are mine. I have complete control, and everything you see there is my decision and I love it. Out of all the commercial art areas I've worked in, the monsters are the best because I am their sole creator, their master. It's the only commercial art that allows me to do that.

What do you think of the reincarnated version of FM magazine?
I don't like it.

Has [publisher] Ray Fery ever approached you to do a cover?
Yes he has, but I have never done one.

Why do you think it's taken so long for a book of your art to come out?
It was a matter of compiling the different parts, it was really hard to find out who owns what. The other thing was a matter of finance; it's an

expensive thing to do, producing a book. But Vanguard and I overcame that by finding out who has what and putting it together. That's what took so long.

Isn't it a shame that illustration as a medium for magazine covers and movie posters has all but died?

It didn't die, its use died. It was replaced by photography which was fashionable at the time and I guess now it's still being used because it's faster and flashier. There are very few people left still illustrating commercially.

We're still using original illustrations on our covers from time to time.

So when are you going to ask me to do one for you?

It would be an honour, Mr. Gogos. And we will, when the time is right. ☺

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MONSTER KID HOME MOVIES COMPILES OVER THREE HOURS OF FORGOTTEN DO-IT-YOURSELF CINEMA MADE BY SOME VERY AMBITIOUS MINI MONSTER FANS.



PINT-SIZED CREATURE FEATURES

BY PAUL CORUPE

Whether you've got a musty 8mm reel gathering mould in the closet, an old camcorder tape shoved behind your John Carpenter DVDs, or even a digital short uploaded on your computer, odds are that if you're a horror fan, you've also spent a lazy childhood Saturday afternoon with camera in hand, trying to make your own backyard fright film. *Monster Kid Home Movies*, an incredible, one-of-a-kind DVD collection compiles 30 short fantastic films from the golden age of Super 8 made by some very ambitious *Famous Monsters-in-lvin'* kids.

"We had a home movie camera, but when I was younger, it was off limits to me," reveals Joe Busam, producer of the *Monster Kid Home Movies* DVD. "Later on, I thought, 'Gee wouldn't it be fun to make our own little horror movie?' It was one thing to play with makeup in front of the mirror, but to put it on a piece of film and show it to everyone else was kind of a kick."

As it turns out, Busam wasn't the only one who was excited by the prospect of taming his childhood fondness for gruesome getups and spooky special effects into four and five-minute films. These short but sweet labours of love were originally only meant to be shared with families and friends, but now they've been dusted off, deemed up and preserved on *Monster Kid Home Movies*. The idea for the DVD came out of a get-together for veteran members of America Online's Classic Horror Film Board at Pittsburgh's Monster Bash convention.

"One year, [board member] Richard Olson

showed along on a drive projector and some films he made back in the 1960s," Busam explains. "The impact those films had on us was just incredible – we were laughing and crying at the same time because we saw a little of ourselves in every one of these things. We couldn't get over how wonderful they were, with all their childhood enthusiasm and imagination." When the group met the following year, several others brought films they had made as kids, including Busam.

"We started talking and decided to get the films transferred and stick them on a DVD so we could share them amongst ourselves," Busam recalls. "Then it dawned on me that the place I work, a post-production facility, had all the resources to put together a full-fledged DVD." So Busam began collecting these crude monster epics from his fellow AOL horror buffs, a group of fans that includes well-known writers, artists, filmmakers and genre personalities like grown-up monster kid Bob Burris, author and film historian Tom Weaver, comic artist (and Basil Gogos art book scribe, see p.26) Kerry Gammit, and animator Frank Dietz, whose early efforts are presented on the DVD alongside equally inspired works by future accountants and real estate agents.

The shorts range from black and white mad

science films from the mid-1950s to rudimentary stop-motion animated experiments, to unapologetic condensed remakes of the classic Universal horrors, but they're all united by youthful exuberance.

"Even if the films don't necessarily pull things off like the directors originally hoped, the drive and the love for the old movies are really there," says Busam. More than that, however, *Monster Kid Home Movies* is a Super 8 snapshot of young

horror fans exploring the ways film can provoke emotions of fear and suspense. The savvy kids almost take the conventions of the genre apart like an old transistor radio, so they can examine each little part and find out what makes it tick, before attempting to put it all back together again. The shorts on the compilation may have turned out a little wobbly, perhaps, but they are true tributes to the classic films that spooked these budding horror auteurs in the theatres just a few weeks before.

To flesh out the stories behind the shorts, *Monster Kid Home Movies* features commentaries by the amateur moviemakers themselves.

"One of the things that made the films special while we were watching them was hearing people reminisce about how they were made, so we





Baby Beasts: Two stills from Kerry Gammill's *Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man*, and one from Richard Olson's *In Dracula's Lab*.

thought maybe the films should have audio commentary," says Busam. It's fascinating to hear the grown-up monster kids reliving their early experiences and poking fun at their film's shortcomings, which can include everything from a dog wandering through the back of the shot to a young actor unable to stop laughing as he delivers an important line about a deadly vampire attack.

Busam's commentary for his own film, an adaptation of Edgar Allan Poe's *The Raven*, is especially funny, as he laments both his parent's "sea foam" home décor and the titular bird itself—a stuffed black dress sock tied off with electrical tape. "I felt a self-deprecating commentary was the only way to salvage my film," he laughs.

Though the compilation focuses on films made from the 1950s through to the 1990s, there is one exception, a 2003 short made by *Frankenstein and Me* director Robert Tinnell's daughter, who couldn't have been more than five or six years old at the time.

"I thought it would be nice to have a little piece from the next age of monster kids, to show that there is another generation who are interested in making these films," explains Busam, adding, "Everybody seems to be on board for a second one. We've got quite a few people who have offered their films."

Meanwhile, *Monster Kid Home Movies* continues to garner popular and critical raves, recently picking up a 2005 Rondo Award for best independent film, a success Busam attributes to the fact that the appeal of these films goes beyond the simple boundaries of the horror genre.

"Anyone who has ever play-acted or pretended when they were kids sees a little of themselves in these films. You don't have to have been a monster kid to like these shorts, you just have to have been a kid with an imagination."

For more info and to order your own copy visit monstarkidhome.com.

IT CAME FROM THE BACKYARD!

The 30 short films on *Monster Kid Home Movies* showcase a wide variety of homespun horror. Here are some selected highlights:

DRACULA MEETS THE WOLFMAN (1965)

by Kerry Gammill

If there was an award for best do-it-yourself makeup, it would definitely go to Kerry Gammill's Universal creature feature "romances." Even though the Wolfman mask is little more than a paper bag with dog hair glued to it, the effect is undeniably successful. All of Gammill's short films are stunningly meticulous.

THE GENTLE OLD MAN (1973)

by Alan Upchurch

The most ambitious film is this work by the late Alan Upchurch and his twin brother Mark, a 36-minute take-off on *The Night Stalker*. Alan plays ruffled newspaper reporter Carl Kolchek, who must solve a mysterious rash of murders by tracking down the titular old man, played by his sibling. Co-written by Tom Abrams, who actually went on to be an award-winning director and screenwriter, the film boasts some impressive cinematography that helped win it an honorable mention at the Eastman Kodak Film Awards.

THE LANDING (1977)

by Joe Schovitz

The Landing is an admirable stop-motion tribute to Ray Harryhausen in which a model kit shuttle lands on an airbrushed beach ball and is attacked by a monster, who rips up the craft's tin foil hull. This strangely endearing film manages some decent atmosphere thanks to a pretty impressive alien landscape, with dry ice floating between papier-mâché stalagmites.

THE LEAVES (1977)

by Frank Dietz


The ultimate no-budget horror shocker! There's no real plot to this film, just a bunch of people pretending to be sucked into a killer pile of leaves as spurts of vampire blood fly everywhere. It's a nicely edited, pretty hilarious short, as are Dietz's other films, including several stop-motion killer dinosaur epics.

THE MONSTERS (1964)

by Richard Olson

Olson's *The Monsters* is a three-minute battle royale between Dracula, Frankenstein, the Wolfman, a Skeleton and the Creature from the Black Lagoon, who looks suspiciously like a kid in an alligator mask. So who wins this fearsome fight? Well, it's kind of hard to tell after all the neighborhood kids join in this amateur wrestling action, but this film is just a lot of fun, full of youthful enthusiasm and mad monster movie love.

Paul Conque



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EVILENKO

Starring Malcolm McDowell, Marton Csokas and Ronald Pickup
Written and directed by David Grieco
TLA Releasing

Will the real Andrei Chikatilo please stand up? *Evilenko* is the second film in just over a decade to profile the Soviet Union's most prolific and sadistic serial killer. The first, HBO's astounding *Citizen X* (1995), is arguably the best fact-based serial killer film since *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* (RM#49), and marginally the most underrated *Evilenko*, conversely, falls short of its predecessor but it's nonetheless well worth a look.

Between the late '70s and early '90s Chikatilo raped, tortured and killed more than 50 children and teenagers in and around the southern Russian city of Rostov, in most cases luring them into the woods from a local train station. David Grieco directs this version of events with tremendous panache, and Malcolm McDowell turns in possibly his best performance since *A Clockwork Orange*, which isn't surprising — this guy simply gives good evil.

But although *Evilenko*'s dialogue is up to snuff, it suffers in the script department. *Citizen X* depicted a police investigation crippled by Soviet bureaucracy, while Grieco's film depicts Chikatilo as a living embodiment of the downfall of communism. Grieco's metaphor is pure gold, a poetic counterpart to Charles Manson, Western media's mascot for the death of flower power, but ultimately *Evilenko* suffers from Grieco's overarching conviction that communism itself is actually viable and that its failure in the Soviet Union was simply due to mismanagement and corruption.

"I was born and raised communist," the Italian writer/director declares in an interview on the jam-packed second disc of extras, "not in the Soviet way but in the Italian way. Italians built democracy, while the Soviets built a dictatorship under the same



Malcolm McDowell as prolific Russian serial killer "Evilenko".

principle." Hare-brained Marxist posturing aside, Grieco's pointless rewriting of many facts in the case often had me scratching my head with one hand and flipping the bird with the other. (Renaming Chikatilo with that ass-clencher of a title is just the beginning.)

So does it sound like I didn't enjoy *Evilenko*? Actually, I did. A lot. In fact, I can't remember the last time I did this much bashing of a film I liked. Make of that what you will.

John W. Bowen

JUST DIE ALREADY!

STAY ALIVE

Starring Jon Foster, Samare Armstrong, and Frankie Muniz
Directed by William Brent Bell
Written by William Brent Bell and Matthew Peterman
Buena Vista Pictures

The J-horror influence continues to linger on in American films, this time like a bad smell with the release of *Stay Alive*. Bo-

rowing the basic premise of *Ring*, this first-time effort by William Brent Bell is an absolute mess of a film, from its incoherent script and wafer-thin characters to its PG-13 scares and unintentionally hilarious dialogue ("Sweet Sebastian Bach, I wanna play!").

The audience is quickly introduced to Loomis Crowley (green), an online gamer who somehow gets his hands on a new demo called *Stay Alive*. When his game character is killed off in the haunted house-themed first-person shooter, Crowley and his two roommates are offed in a similar fashion by an unseen entity. After Crowley's funeral, long-time friend Hutch (Foster) finds the disc, and it isn't long before his gang of curiously good-looking video game geeks discover if "you die in the game, you die for real" — in this case at the hands of a CGI Elizabeth Bathory (!?).

While the plot is similar to *Ring*'s watch-the-videotape-and-die premise, it doesn't work anywhere near as well. In *Ring* you had seven days of suspenseful agony before your inevitable death; in *Stay Alive*, you always have the option of, oh, I don't know, maybe turning off the game? To compensate,



Stay Alive: A cheap, unintentional horror film parody.

the movie ditches this device about halfway through so Bathory can continue to terrorize the cast in the real world.

Because *Stay Alive* comes via a Disney-owned company, it's not surprising that gore and violence are virtually non-existent, which is a problem since the kills are far too predictable and clichéd. The video game premise provides a convenient excuse as to why the CGI killer looks so cheap, but the bottom line is it looks cheap.

If William Brent Bell wants a directorial career he should try landing a job with the *Scary Movie* franchise, where his ability to make unintentional horror film parodies might be put to better use.

Aaron Lupton

FACE-OFF IN THE FAR EAST

TOKYO PSYCHO

Starring Sachiko Kokubu, Seiji Chihara

and Masashi Taniguchi

Directed by Ataru Oikawa

Written by Noriko Tanimura and Ataru Oikawa

Panik House Entertainment

My Asian horror repertoire pretty much begins with *Godzilla* and ends with *The Ring*. As for the rest, I find them disjointed, pointlessly convoluted and as obsessively self-imitative as any American post-Scream teen fodder. (There. I've said it.)

The good news – for me at least – is that *Tokyo Psycho* is definitely not typical J-horror. No pale little kids, no ghostly girls peering out from behind long black hair.



Water, cell phones and computers are set dressing, not plot devices, and the storyline isn't labyrinthine to the point of implosion.

The bad news is, it's just not a very good film, but a digital video cheapie by the director of *Tomei*, Ataru Oikawa.

Yumiko (Kokubu) is a graphic designer convinced she's being stalked by a creepy guy who had a crush on her in high school. She spumed his ass, which may or may not have had something to do with him subsequently murdering his parents and removing their faces. Turns out she's right, and now, having changed his name and appearance, he's engaged to her best friend. What ensues is a rather predictable stalker thriller, neither inventive nor particularly suspenseful, despite some good performances by the leads.

And apparently Japanese audiences are as glib as the rest of us when it comes to the old based-on-a-true-story gag. "Rapped from the headlines, *Tokyo Psycho* retraces the steps of a real Japanese serial killer," barks the back cover, but notes reveal that the two cases it's allegedly based on – manga-obsessed child molester/serial killer Tsutomu Miyazaki and Hiroyuki Tsuchida, who killed his family in 2003 – bear absolutely no resemblance to the film whatsoever. Extras include a featurette, trailers and footage from the Tokyo premiere, where various cast and crew remi-

nisc about driving drunk and trade anecdotes about bow shaped their kids are.

John W. Bowen

NOT FOR NEW MOMS

JOSHUA

Starring Ward Roberts, Christy Jackson

and Aaron Gaffey

Written and directed by Travis Betz

Fangoria's Gorezone

Although nobody in their right mind takes the subject of child abuse lightly, I'll admit it doesn't skeeze me out on a visceral level quite as much as it does many other individuals (chalk it up to my happy childhood perhaps). That said, this gory backyard cheapie pushed a few of my yucky buttons. I just hope writer/director Travis Betz can take a left-handed compliment, because my revulsion at some of *Joshua*'s content speaks volumes about his talents.

After a lengthy absence, Kelby (Roberts) returns home for his father's funeral and meets some old friends who won't let him forget a nasty secret lurking in their collective past. As revelations pile up, we're slowly let in on a series of horrific events that began when Kelby and company were kids and continued into their late teens. Spoiler potential pretty much nixes my revealing much more here about who the titular character once was and what he eventually became, but suffice to say it involves the protracted pain and suffering of someone small and defenseless at the hands of some very sick people.

As with most micro-budget efforts, the flaws in this film are often glaring. Some makeup effects don't quite rise to the occasion, and while the leads are generally good, some of the supporting cast members are pretty awful. The story takes a little too long to find its legs but Betz puts it all to rights after about 40 minutes or so, and once this clever, ambitious and nasty little number gets underway, he really tests one's threshold for disgust.

Flaws and all, *Joshua*'s depiction of a child being abused and ultimately corrupted by human monsters is damn disturbing. And for that, Mr. Betz, you dangerously untinged bastard, I officially pronounce you a newfound force to be reckoned with.

John W. Bowen



BOLL GETS BARBEQUEED... AGAIN

BLOODRAYNE

Starring Kristanna Loken, Michael Madsen
and Ben Kingsley
Directed by Uwe Boll
Written by Guinevere Turner
Universal Home Entertainment

Welcome to the part of the magazine where we dump a bag of briquettes on the fire, toss on another can of lighter fluid, and get those coals nice and hot—so we can rake Uwe Boll over 'em. *Bloodrayne*, the director's third video game adaptation to sink out of theatres in as many years, joins *House of the Dead* and *Alone in the Dark* in the Internet Movie Database's bottom 25 films, making him the most maligned director working today. And it makes no difference that *Bloodrayne* is the most accomplished of the terrible trio, because Boll has already cemented his reputation as horror's whipping boy.

That crown of scorn earns its barbs this time around for the usual Boll shortcomings, meaning pretty much everything. Penned, oddly enough, by *American Psycho* co-writer Guinevere Turner, *Bloodrayne* stars Kristanna Loken (*Terminator 3*) as the mysterious vampire-human hybrid title character. After escaping from a sideshow, she's befriended by a group of warriors led by Vladimir (a badly wigged and thoroughly wooden Madsen), who's fighting a war against a vampire army led by Kagan (a badly wigged and truly embarrassed Kingsley). The convoluted tale also involves a quest for super-powered vampire body parts, a romantic subplot that allows for a laughably crass dungeon sex scene, medieval women in fetish gear (!), and a bizarre blood orgy featuring Meatloaf in a Miss Piggy wig. Other recognizable thespians appearing include Udo Kier as a monk, Michelle Rodriguez as a caty vamp-killer and Billy Zane (badly wigged, of course) as a... well, it's tough to say just why he's in the movie, actually.

The direction and editing on *Bloodrayne*



Bloodrayne: Kristanna Loken biting off more than she can chew in Uwe Boll's latest disasterpiece.

are expectedly over-stylized yet awkward, the acting an afterthought, and the pacing robotically on par with the average video game. At least there's no actual vid game footage inserted in the film, as in *House of the Dead*, nor is there a lengthy pre-movie credit scroll needed to help the plot make sense, like in *Alone in the Dark*. Boll may in fact be improving, which is a shame, as film fans need a villain to embody all reasons we rail against artless cinematic product. Fuck mediocrity, we need *Bad*—Uwe Boll *bad*. In any case, we're keeping those coals hot.

David Alexander

I SMELL A FRAUD...

SLAUGHTERHOUSE OF THE RISING SUN

Starring Cheryl Dent, Vin Crease
and Michele Morrow
Directed by Vin Crease
Written by Vin Crease and
Jonathan A. Stein
Velocity Home Entertainment

No question, the '70s have ruled the horror box office over the last few years, as the skew

of remakes and original films that have tried to capture that elusive aesthetic prove. By passing off *Slaughterhouse of the Rising Sun* as a lost film from 1972, writer/director/actor Vin Crease takes this emulation to a whole new level: forgery! He meticulously constructs an illusory throwback to the era that produced films like *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and *The Hills Have Eyes*, and it almost works.

Cheryl Dent stars as Jennifer, a lost soul who suffers a psychotic episode while making a porn loop (with a midget), landing her in a mental hospital. She's released with a pocketful of experimental drugs and sent home to her parents. Acknowledging that her past is forever behind her, and haunted by the traumatic childhood death of her sister, she heads to the desert. After being terrorized by a pair of drunken red-necks, she's saved from being raped by a disabled Manson-like cult leader (Crease) and his gaggle of drug-gulping, homicidal hippies. Much ingestion of illicit





RUD-RAT REFUSE

DUMPSTER BABY

Starring Angela Benjamin, Akasha Spjolin and Jeffrey Chilton
Written and directed by James Bickert and Randy Hill
Troma Team Video

When my editor tossed this at me I found myself giggling like a schoolgirl in anticipation of what I assumed was going to be something along the lines of *The Suckling* or *It's Alive*. You know: a low-budget shocker filled with lame dialogue, fake blood, fart jokes and bare breasts — I mean, come on, it's being distributed by Team Troma, the company responsible for *A Nymphoid Barbarian in Dinosaur Hell*, *Scrotal Vengeance*, and *Tales From the Crapper*. But what I ended up with was something that instead of being goofy and gory, was gritty, edgy and profoundly disturbed.

The story begins when a morbidly obese crackwhore gives birth to a baby in a flophouse, where it's promptly ejected into a dumpster. After being discovered by a couple having sex in the back alley of an S&M club, the child goes on a depraved adventure that includes getting locked in the trunk of a taxi, used as a tool for blackmail, sold for comics and bondage gear, ripped from the arms of a young, brutally raped schoolgirl, set aflame on a river while trapped in a styrofoam beer cooler, and nearly eaten by a cannibal.

Having witnessed the sickost, sleaziest side of human behaviour, the baby is curiously silent and unseen throughout the film, and it's not until the final reveal that we discover why. It's in those last moments that the movie becomes unsettling to the point where you want to turn it off.

Troma is offering an "unrated special edition" of the movie that's available only in fullscreen format and has a soundtrack so shifty it's often inaudible. The DVD is packed with the usual Troma fare, but skip the director's commentary, which was recorded under the obvious influence of a lot of alcohol. The laughs in *Dumpster Baby* are few, if any, and though it's not a "dirty" movie by any stretch of the imagination, you'll still want to shower off all the ugliness that coats you while watching it.

Last Chance Lance



narcotics leads to a road trip to an abandoned and reputedly haunted farmhouse, where Jennifer's psychosis can fully blossom and flower children can start to die.

Crease does a masterful job of giving the film a vintage appearance: colour-saturated images scratched to great effect and an opening credit sequence that's dead-on '70s. Unfortunately, too many elements conspire against the illusion to take you out of the film. While the majority of the characters look authentic, Dent does not; her capable performance is totally undermined by her contemporary haircut? In addition, there are editing and sound design decisions that don't jive, a tired homage to *TCM*, a lack of gore (with the exception of some splattered brain matter) and some ghostly shenanigans in the last reel that add an unwelcome dimension to the "Rising Sun" portion of the title. It's a great experiment, but as a child of the '70s, I'll stick with the real deal.

The Gore-Met

A CREEPLESS CREEPER

IT WAITS

Starring Cerina Vincent, Dominic Zamprogna and Greg Kean
Directed by Steven R. Monroe
Written by Stephen J. Cannell, Richard Christian Matheson and Thomas E. Szollosi
Anchor Bay

If the non-specific pronoun "It" in *It Waits* refers to the audience patiently waiting for just one shock, laugh, or gross-out, then this straight-to-DVD offering will have been aptly titled. Otherwise, this first entry in what will hopefully be a short-lived trend of ripping off the near-conceptless plot line of *Jeepers Creepers* has absolutely nothing to recommend it — no gore, no sex, no scares.

Part of what made *Jeepers Creepers* so fun was the believable, bickering relationship between the sibling protagonists, and the slow parsing out of the truck driver/demon's anatomical details, climaxing in the revelation of his angelic/demonic wingspan. *It Waits* aims for a similar effect, spending the opening ten minutes showing firewatcher Danny (*Cabin Fever*'s Cerina Vincent) drinking herself into a stupor while replaying stylized flashbacks of the death of her best friend, who was killed in a drunk-driving accident with Danny at the wheel.

Soon Danny's firewatching station is under siege by a smaller, dumber version of *JC*'s demon, wings and all. Why? According to the anthropologist who sleepwalks onscreen just long enough to spew out some pseudo-anthropological mumbo jumbo, Danny's tormentor is an ancient demon that feeds off of negative energy. This doesn't explain why the demon murdered the seemingly happy anthropology students who released it from a sealed cave, but the bit about negative energy is obviously the writers' way of trying to tie Danny's personal demons in with the film's monster. (Three scribbles on a project is never a good sign, even if that team includes network television stalwart Stephen J. Cannell and Richard Christian Matheson.)

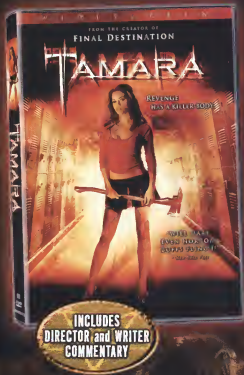
Since Danny seems to get over her friend's death as soon as she sleeps with a hunky park ranger and tells him how guilty



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OVERLOOKED, FORGOTTEN AND DISMISSED THIS ISSUE: LANCE LANGUISHERS IN LOCKDOWN SCREAMS IN THE WITCH-HOUSE

PRISON OF THE DEAD

Fall Moon Pictures

Director David DeCoteau (credited as Victoria Sloan), the "mastermind" behind such goofy greifs as *Leeches!* and *Wives of Wilf Street*, presents a tale of pretty twentysomethings who gather for a friend's funeral. The funeral turns out to be an elaborate hoax, but the laughs soon turn to screams when, upon discovering the funeral home is built upon a former prison for witches, they decide to break out a ouija board. One by one they're possessed by dead witches, which in turn awakens the mouldy bodies of the prison's former executioners — who appear to be wearing half-price Halloween masks. Lots of blood, lame sex and lazier dialogue later, the viewer is left wondering if DeCoteau should be in prison for this miscreant of a movie.

Body Count: 7

Best Line: "I've never had sex with a zombie. Is this gonna hurt?"



POORLY EXECUTED

GARDEN OF THE DEAD

RetroMedia Pictures

This reissue of the 1974 not-so classic has a group of cons at a prison camp (more like a crappy set from *Hogan's Heroes*, really) spending their days brewing formaldehyde and getting high on the fumes. A botched escape has them speeding off in a chemical-filled truck which crashes into a cemetery and contaminates the graveyard — where they're buried after being shot dead by the guards. That night the cons come back to life and, according to the liner notes, embark on a "sex-starved" killing spree back at the prison, but not before chopping up some nearby trailer trash. Clocking in at 59 minutes, this sucker is the perfect time-waster if you've got an hour to kill. Filled with no-budget, drive-in-style special effects, it's a campy little schlockfest.

Body Count: 21

Number of times the "sex-starved" cons have sex: 0



HELLBLOCK 13

Troma Team Video

The always ailing Canadian Scream Queen Debbie Rochon (*Bleed, Terror, Frenzy*), um, sizzles in this low-budget jailhouse romp as a serial killer about to fry in the electric chair. Before she shuffles off this mortal coil she imparts three scary tales to her executioner, played by ol' Leatherface himself Gunnar Hansen. The macabre stories deal with a mother drowning her kids, while trash redneck revenge and bikers who sacrifice an undercover cop to their patron saint. Each vignette is entertaining, competently filmed and dishes out some good gore, but it all comes back to Rochon who steals the show by looking so damn sexy when she's blood-spattered. Unfortunately, Hansen doesn't fare as well and once again proves that his best roles are the silent ones.

Body Count: 6

Steak-Related Beatings: 1



Last Chance Lance

she feels, it's hard to buy the connection, or really care for that matter. Danny also seems unfazed by the mounting body count; she just wants to get that demon off her back, go home, and have another drink. Audience members know just how she feels.

James Grainger

ALL ART AND NO DEVIL

ART OF THE DEVIL

Starring Supakorn Chaimongkol, Aisa Wit

and Somchai Sathutham

Directed by Thanit Jitnukul

Written by Ghost Gypsy

Five Star Production

Lord Byron once wrote "sweet is revenge... especially to women." Too bad he didn't write the script for *Art of the Devil*, the story of a black-magic woman scorned that plays more like a gory soap opera than an occult thriller.

This Thai horror entry opens with the gruesome murder of a successful businessman's entire household by mysterious, malevolent forces. You'd think that someone smart enough to get rich might also figure out that cheating on his wheelchair-bound wife with a noble gold digger might eventually cause problems for him and his family. The filmmakers might also have realized that if you want audiences to root for the poor young (and pregnant) thing, she should have better motives for her homicidal spree than moving into a nice house.

Art of the Devil is a litany of murders as Boom, the pissed-off ex-mistress, uses witchcraft and wiles to take out her adversaries. The killings are beautiful and bloody: a stark hospital room spewed with gore-soaked eels slithering out of a bedridden body, and a colourful religious procession interrupted by the fatal projectile vomiting of razor blades by one of its participants. Heads ooze. Orifices bleed. And yet... we do not cheer.

For a film about the occult, *Art of the Devil* barely shows us any spooky rituals. There's a creepy old guy off in a dark room chanting, and occasionally secondary characters discuss superstitions, but we learn nothing of Thai witchcraft practices or culture. In addition, there's a cop on the case but he's ineffective, and a kidnapped girl who might save the day, but we don't really care. Because there's no mystery — we know what Boom is out to do and how — the only thrill is seeing how the next guy will go down in pain. It seems like they've got some of these problems sorted for the sequel, which features teen school-girls and even more extreme gore. It might be cliché, but hopefully less of a bore.

Liisa Ladouceur



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This month Chan-wook Park wraps his bloody revenge trilogy with the release of *SYMPATHY FOR LADY VENGEANCE*. The sadistic Korean filmmaker details his recipe for revenge.

ATONEMENT IN BLOOD

BY BRIAN ABRAHAM

If one were to look at the overriding themes pervasive in horror cinema, surely vengeance tops the list. Be it Jason, Freddy, or countless other stalk 'n' slash icons, revenge is a dish best served hot and bloody. Chan-wook Park has made the study of revenge the centerpiece to his acclaimed Vengeance Trilogy. His inaugural installment, *Sympathy for Mister Vengeance* (2002) told the tale of a sympathetic deaf mule's quest to find a suitable organ donor to save his sister's life, which, of course, goes horribly wrong and demonstrates in gruesome detail (the violence is literally autopsied in one scene) the evil we commit in the name of good.

The relicking, darkly comic follow-up *Oldboy* (2003) details the fifteen years of imprisonment and five days of vengeance experienced and meted out by its seemingly ordinary "hero", resulting in scenes of claw-hammer dentistry, live octopus consumption and a gory do-it-yourself tongue removal. For those with strong hearts and stronger stomachs, both are undeniably lyrical showpieces of tension, frenzy, and aggressive storytelling.

"Vengeance is everywhere; it's in us, it's who we are," Park tells *Rue Morgue*. "When dealing with revenge in my films I never care whether it is right or wrong. Instead I question the need for revenge by people living in a modern society. For people who harbour negative feelings, the idea of taking revenge on an injustice they experienced can be a relief. But the pursuit of vengeance itself is of course only destructive."

The savage and sombre elegiac third film in the trilogy, *Sympathy for Lady Vengeance* (in theatres May 5th from Tartan USA), shines new light onto Park's themes and identifies him as

one of the most impressive new artists on the scene. This time the filmmaker explores vengeance through a female protagonist, Geum-ja (popular Korean star Young-ae Lee), the victim of a double-cross who's sent to prison for thirteen years for a kidnapping/murder. While there she cultivates a roster of allies to help her enact brutal revenge on Mr. Baek (*Oldboy*'s Min-sik Choi). Park delivers some truly shocking scenes, including a dream sequence involving a dog with a human face, but overall the violence is mostly off-screen this time around.

"People expecting another *Oldboy* have been disappointed to a degree," he admits, "but I think that is because [*Lady Vengeance*] shows

cally and financially successful of the triptych in its native land (partly due to the popularity of its star Lee), and now that the Vengeance Trilogy is complete, Park is ready to make a big plunge into the horror scene at last. The recently-released compilation of Asian horror shorts *Three... Extremes* (the sequel to *Three*) includes his film *Cut*, a blackly humorous revenge tale sharing plot similarities with *Saw*. Recently, the filmmaker announced that his next movie would be a full-fledged horror piece, dealing with the dualistic themes of sanity and insanity, good and evil, and heaven and hell – purportedly a Satanic-themed supernatural story. This suits him just fine, as long as he can bring the same unique

**"VENGEANCE IS EVERYWHERE,
IT'S IN US, IT'S WHO WE ARE."
CHAN-WOOK PARK**

the true consequence of devoting your life to revenge. I wanted to tell a story of repentance – a killer who seeks vengeance only to find that it is not the solution they thought it would be. Because, while vengeance may appeal to us as people, even as nations, we all know the path it follows only leads to ruin. . . . Since this was the last film in the cycle, I wanted to bring about a story more of repentance than revenge for the sake of glorified violence."

Lady Vengeance has become the most criti-

cal approach as he has to the genre that has made him famous.

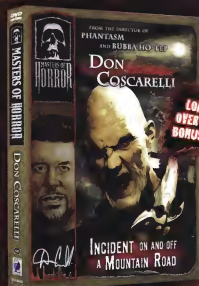
"Actually, I would very much like to do some more 'traditional' horror type of films," Park reveals. "But not the typical sort. I'd like to turn the genre on its ear, like I hopefully have done with the revenge movie. I've said what I want to with that genre; it's time to do some different takes on the familiar stories, and horror is probably the best to experiment in, simply because there is nothing taboo, nothing it cannot do." ☠



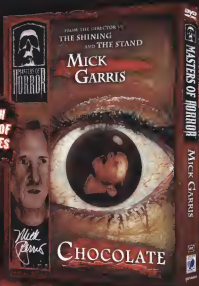
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REISSUES



Visiting Hours: Michael Ironside as sado-masochistic psycho Colt.

MAXIMUM IRONSIDE

VISITING HOURS (1982)

Starring Michael Ironside,
William Shatner and Lee Grant
Directed by Jean-Claude Lord
Written by Brian Taggart
Anchor Bay

As if an enormously sweaty, knife-wielding Michael Ironside holed up in your bathroom isn't disturbing enough, the relentlessly sleazy *Visiting Hours* assaults its audience even further by having him burst out from behind a door wearing nothing but cheap jewelry and garishly-applied makeup — like a murderous, cross-dressing Jack-in-the-box (!).

Though the Montreal-shot *Visiting Hours* is often classified as a slasher, a reputation it picked up after being branded a Video Nasty in the 1980s, it's really more of a menacing psycho thriller. In the film, Deborah (Grant), an opinionated feminist journalist, returns

home one night to find misogynist creep Colt (Ironside) nakedly lying in wait for her (in the aforementioned retina-damaging scene). She somehow survives his vicious knife attack, but even from the apparent security of her hospital bed, Deborah's not safe from her

determined stalker, as Colt seizes, lies and murders his way in to finish the job.

Special guest star Bill Shatner may get top billing for his handful of scenes as Grant's exposition-spouting TV producer, but this is Ironside's show all the way. In many ways, it's the role he was born to perform — an intense, seedy bastard as fond of leather tank tops as he is of snapping Polaroids of his

female victims gasping out their last. Though he has very little dialogue in the film, Colt is downright terrifying when he makes an unforgettable call to Deborah's nurse and plays her daughter's talking doll over the phone, and in a scene in which he rolls his arm in glass shards to get closer to his prey as

an emergency room patient.

Even when Ironside isn't around, French-Canadian filmmaker Jean-Claude Lord creeps out the audience with candid POV shots from behind fences and around corners, giving *Visiting Hours* an unseemly, voyeuristic feel. Despite all these effective devices, it's never quite clear what kind of statement the film tries to make, as it taps into the fear of a strong woman losing her balance of power, and then turns around and exploits it with luridly shot, graphic violence directed at the heroine. Still, there's no denying *Visiting Hours* is a well-made, if slightly overlong thriller with enough scares to keep your bedpan in regular rotation.

Paul Corupe

DASHBOARD DELIRIUM

THE BEING (1983)

Starring Martin Landau, Marianne Gordon
and José Ferrer
Written and directed by Jackie Kong
Media Blasters/Shriek Show

Ah, those dying days of the drive-in era — heady times indeed. Bargain basement booze, bong hits, bathtub hallucinogens, and the occasional hand job, all within the cozy confines of your parents' faux-wood-paneled station wagon. Somehow amid all these distractions, I actually managed to see that pivotal handful of films that transformed me from a casual fan into a member of the pathological horror nerd herd haunting these unholy pages. And while I'd be exaggerating to assert that el cheapo quickie *The Being* was as instrumental as *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* or *Phantom* in the aforementioned metamorphosis, it was definitely on the secondary menu, and that's why I'm getting all misty-eyed over Shriek Show's reissue.

Born of that ubiquitous monster movie standby toxic waste, the titular lo-fi beastie terrorizes Pottsville, Idaho, a Podunk shithole where, we imagine, locals might even welcome a toxic waste monster attack to break up the tedium. Our hero is a local cop played by producer William Osco, billed variously as Rexx Coltrane and Johnny Commander, but *The Being's* supporting cast is formidable.

Legendary and semi-legendary actors slumming here include Martin Landau (during his twenty-odd-year slump between TV's *Mission Impossible* and that Best Supporting Actor Oscar), José Ferrer, Dorothy Malone, cult fave comedian Kinky Friedman and former *Lough-In* regular Ruth Buzzi. All of the above go a long way toward making a well-intentioned but poorly executed anti-censorship subplot bearable, in which industrialist and anti-pornography crusader Landau





The Being: A delicious drive-in creature feature.

downplays the dangers of dumping nuclear waste into the local water supply.

The bokey-ass monster is only sporadically revealed, looking for all the world like a substandard version of one of those kids' drawings brought brilliantly to life by Dave Devries in *The Monster Engine* (RM#53). Still, there's an infectiously inventive spirit at work here, bolstered by first-rate actors who aren't afraid to throw themselves headlong into the cheesy action. Long overdue (if unforgivably short on extras), *The Being* will make an ideal addition to your next late-nighter with *The Deadly Spawn* (RM#43), a big-ass bucket of popcorn and various cheap, nasty drugs to be named later.

John W. Bowen

ONE MAN'S TRASH....

SATAN'S BLACK WEDDING (1975)
CRIMINALLY INSANE (1975)
CRIMINALLY INSANE 2 (1987)

Written and directed by Nick Millard
Retro Shock-O-Rama

Back in the '70s director Nick Millard (a.k.a. Philip Miller, a.k.a. Nick Phillips, etc.), famous for trappy, psy-

chodelic grindhouse sex classics like *Roxanne* and *Lustful Addiction*, among many others, decided to hang up his softcore porn lens and take a stab at horror. The result, regarded by some to be a lost grindhouse classic, was *Satan's Black Wedding*. It tells the story of Mark (Greg Braddock), a man who returns to California for his sister's funeral but discovers she's actually a vampire. He confronts her and is horrified to find that Satan has chosen him to marry her and procreate in order to give birth to the Antichrist. An interesting premise, but it's unfortunately marred by terrible acting, horrible camera work and lame effects. The blood, though copious, looks like paint (think *Blood Feast*) and the actors' obviously uncomfortable dollar-store teeth are more laughable than scary.



That same year Millard directed the much more competently filmed and at times unsettling *Criminally Insane* — the real jewel in this triple-header DVD. It stars Priscilla Alden (*Night Nurse*) as "Crazy Fat Ethel", a 250-pound recently-released mental patient

who moves in with her grandmother, who tries to put the girl on a diet. One granny-cide later Ethel's on a killing spree that works up an appetite for cannibalism.

Other than presenting what may be the very first modern female serial killer movie, the film succeeds because Priscilla Alden plays the role of Ethel so deadpan and humourless. Any sympathy she'd otherwise inspire is turned to repulsion as she slashes apart victims and spouts racial slurs as easily as she downs a pound of bacon. You gotta keep watching just to see what horrible things she'll do next.

Included in the set is the maseable shot-on-video *Criminally Insane 2*, made twelve years later and featuring an older, slightly haggard Alden reprising the role of Ethel, who goes on another hunger-induced killing spree. Ruined by a terrible soundtrack, bad editing and a dearth of recycled footage from the prequel, its only redeeming scene has Ethel dancing in the backyard with a knife and a dog.

Retro Shock-O-Rama presents all three movies on one DVD loaded with extras including interviews with Millard and Alden, and some extremely boring commentary tracks. As far as this Millard set goes, one out of three ain't bad, but overall the fat lady has definitely sung.

Last Chance Lance

MORE BORE THAN BORG

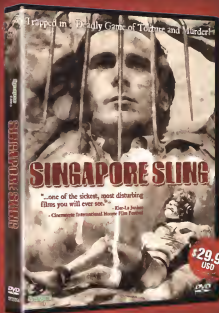
STAR TREK: BORG FAN COLLECTIVE

Starring Patrick Stewart,
Kate Mulgrew, Scott Bakula, et al
Directed by Rob Bowman, David Livingston,
Terry Windell, et al
Written by Brannon Baga, Michael Piller,
Maurice Hurley, et al
Paramount

I know what you're thinking: "Why is *Rue Morgue* wasting space on *Star Trek*?" Truth be told, the Borg are scary, at least by *Trek*'s squeaky-clean standards. As an implacable, single-minded army, forcibly mutilating their victims with painful-looking cybernetic implants and absorbing their individuality into a hive-like collective, the Borg embody terrors physical, psychological and technological. It's a sci-fi *Frankenstein* body horror scenario with a classic



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CURE FOR INSOMNIA

BAD DREAMS (1989)

Starring Jennifer Rubin, Bruce Abbott and Richard Lynch
Directed by Andrew Fleming
Written by Andrew Fleming,
Stephen E. de Souza, Michael Dick, et. al
Anchor Bay



Despite a promising premise, director Andrew (The Craft) Fleming's debut feature *Bad Dreams* is a pedestrian affair even by '80s horror standards. Strangely, though, it's inexplicably (and presumably unintentionally) a remake of the previous year's *Nightmare On Elm Street 3: Dream Warriors*, with its flambéed villain, mysteriously dying mental patients, and the presence of Jennifer Rubin, who co-starred in the third Freddy flick.

Rubin appears here as Cynthia, the only survivor of a '70s-era hippie cult burned alive by their leader Harris (ubiquitous genre villain Richard Lynch, himself a former real-life burn victim who reportedly set himself alight to protest the Vietnam War). Awakening after a thirteen-year coma, Cynthia finds herself in an asylum under the care of touchy-feely therapist Dr. Alex Karmen (Re-Armistator's Bruce Abbott), who places her in group therapy for "borderline personalities."

If that wasn't torment enough, she soon finds herself haunted by visions of Harris — in both original and extra-crispy recipe. Not surprisingly, someone starts killing off the other group members in not terribly interesting ways. Is it the ghost of Harris? Or Cynthia herself? Perhaps someone totally unrelated to the story? The film dares you to give a shit.

Despite a handful of graphic gore scenes (a bloody shower of body parts pouring down from an overhead vent is a rare highlight), *Bad Dreams* is more TV movie than horror movie. The ultimate reveal of the killer feels like a *Murder, She Wrote* leftover, and manages to be both surprising and obvious at once — which is some sort of an achievement, I guess.

The DVD features are as deceptive as the title, including a trio of "making of" featurettes, with a combined running time of about ten minutes, and a deleted ending that's even more stupid and perfunctory than the one they went with. Fleming provides an amusingly apologetic commentary, and his shooting script (punched up by *Die Hard* scribe Steven E. de Souza) is also included, proving that behind every mediocre horror film is a mediocre screenplay.

Joseph O'Brien

message about conformity and imperialism. And while they aren't likely to impress gorehounds raised on *Cannibal Holocaust*, even the show's detractors had to feel some joy watching the self-righteous, do-gooder crew of the Enterprise-D get their jumpsuited asses handed to them in the Gigeresque cybermonsters' inaugural *Next Generation* episode Q Who?

After that, the Borg proved popular enough to merit a rematch in the third season cliffhanger *The Best Of Both Worlds*, which saw stalwart Captain Jean-Luc Picard assimilated and reborn as Borg baddie Locutus, an event that, in a rare departure from the show's de rigueur character reset switch, would continue to haunt him right up until the second *TNG* feature film *First Contact* (not included in this collection, which restricts itself to double-dipping only television episodes that are already available on disc).

The four-DVD set traces the Borg linearly through the *Trek* universe, beginning with their most recent appearance in the goddamn prequel series *Enterprise*. It actually manages to be scary during a *Thing*-inspired opening set piece in which an Arctic research team uncovers the icebound wreckage of a Borg spacecraft whose occupants aren't quite dead. Once the regular cast shows up, though, it's more bore than Borg.

Then there are the six *Next Generation* episodes, which include the monsters' aforementioned debut, I, Borg, which needlessly humanized them, and the atrocious two-parter *Descent*, which finally reduced them to the second-rate henchmen of Data's evil twin. The bulk of the set is comprised of the seven Borg-themed episodes from *Star Trek: Voyager*. Producers introduced some ratings-boosting T&A in the form of *Seven Of Nine* (Jeri Ryan) in the above-average two-parter *Scorpion*. Owing as much to *Voyager*'s shrinking viewership as to their own popularity, the Borg returned to the show with increasing frequency, usually in sweeps week two-partners like *Dark Frontier* and *Unimatrix Zero*. It's a hat and miss collection recommended mainly for assimilation by casual Trekkies/Trekkers, and fans of Jeri Ryan's breasts. But you know that already, didn't you?

Joseph O'Brien



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CARTOON **THE REAL GHOSTBUSTERS**,
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BY MONICA S. KUEBLER

If you were a kid in the 1980s, chances are you woke up early to watch *The Real Ghostbusters*. You certainly knew the answer to "Who ya gonna call?" and may have become obsessed with the animated series after seeing the 1984 live-action film that inspired it. After all, apart from *Scooby Doo*, "horror" cartoons were pretty scarce back then, and unlike *Scooby Doo*, in which the ghosties and ghoulies tended to leave very human, non-supernatural explanations, the baddies in *The Real Ghostbusters* didn't have to.

For the uninitiated, *The Real Ghostbusters*—named so due to copyright issues with a totally unrelated animated series from mid-'70s also called *The Ghost Busters*—presents characters from the film in the realm of an animated cartoon for kids. Ghostbusters Egon, Ray, Winston and Peter, along with their secretary Janine and resident office spook Slimer, investigate and foil evil spectres in their trusty hears, the Ecto-1, usually while sidestepping angry New York City officials. Kookier and wackier than its cinematic predecessor, *TRGB* served up a slew

of boogeymen, demons, ghosts and, of course, ectoplasm.

Sony Pictures recently called up *The Real Ghostbusters*, relaunching three single-disc DVD collections—*Spoopy Spirits*, *Slimebusters* and *Creatures of the Night*—each containing four thematically linked episodes from the show's 1986 and 1987 seasons.

Of course, like many things fondly remembered from childhood, *TRGB* was much cooler

when we were ten, but all things considered, it has aged surprisingly well. Perhaps due to its standard-issue, always reliable Saturday-morning-cartoon animation style, or the wise-cracking dialogue, this show simply doesn't feel twenty years old. The only element that really stamps a date on it is the occasional dressing of '80s pop tunes, which were probably considered just as cheesy back then.

Rewatching the series as an adult, it's plainly obvious that the writers were keenly aware that their viewing audience also included grown-up fans of the feature film, since almost every episode includes some surprising sexual innuendo, as well as allusions to historical events and other genre references guaranteed to fly right over the heads of the show's primary school-age demographic. For instance, in *Adventures in Slime And Space*, after Slimer accidentally becomes gigantic, kidnaps Janine and positions himself atop the Empire State Building à la King Kong, a character comments "Where have I seen this before?," in *Ghostbuster Of The Year*, the four—some find themselves confronted with a seemingly malevolent spirit who continually calls out



for his beloved sled "Rosebud", a nod to *Citizen Kane*.

Clever references aside, *TRGB* is still a kids' show and essentially follows a simple, standard format for each episode. There's a ghostly threat that sends the team running at least once before they buckle down and put their proven picks to work, and, naturally, each outing wraps up neatly with a happy ending and some sort of moral lesson: sharing is good, teamwork is important, don't judge a book by its cover,

never give up, and never have sex with a demon-possessed human (okay, that last one is a fresbia from us here at AM).

The biggest gripe with these DVDs, however, isn't the show itself. With such a rabid fanbase and a hugely successful run in syndication, *TRGB* seems fit for a boxed set, or at the very least Sony could have included some extras for the diehards, but it's a no-go on both. There's only the episodes on these discs, plus some previews. Sure, they boast a value price tag (under \$10 each), but after twenty years in the making, kiddie market or not, it's still monumentally disappointing. Fans ain't afraid of a ghost, so why the heck is Sony? ☹



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A CRUEL QUARTET

by THE GORE-MET

The giallo was one of the most popular genres in the Italian cinema of the late '60s and '70s, stylishly slashing and splashing across screens with an abundance of fiercely sadistic, sexual plots and wildly inventive titles. Hundreds of these sordid crime dramas were produced, and while many were filmed in English for the international market, very few were ever released on home video. Those that did appear were butchered due their graphic content. Individuals with a serious interest in the subgenre had to track down obscure VHS tapes from Greece, Holland and Japan, where versions

of the films were usually uncut and presented in their proper aspect ratios – and subsequently well-bootlegged.

The advent of the DVD format has, of course, changed all this. The lure of filthy lucre has seen the doors of Italian film vaults thrown open and once obscure or never-released gialli are now becoming available in excellent DVD versions. This recent fearsome giallo four-some from Blue Underground proves that there is still plenty of black-gloved gold left to be mined.

THE FORBIDDEN PHOTOS OF A LADY ABOVE SUSPICION (1970)

This is the first of three gialli from producer/director Luciano Ercoli, which stands in marked contrast to his later, more demure and formulaic entries (see *RMN53*), as Ercoli dishes dollops of sleaze in this one – at least as much as Italian censors would allow.

Gorgeous Dagmar Lassander (*Hatchet for the Honeymoon*) stars as Minou, the pill-popping, scotch-swilling wife of a wealthy businessman who becomes the blackmail target of a mysterious psychopath (Samón Andreu) armed with an audio tape documenting her husband's involvement in the murder of a financier. Every lead to the blackmailer, who periodically pops up for odd bouts of sado-masochistic sex, is a dead end, and Minou begins to lose her grip on sanity.

Forbidden Photos is an unremarkable yet atypical example of the genre, a potboiler that focuses on the torment inflicted on Minou by the

despicable blackmailer. By the final reel, everyone is cast in a suspicious light, including her best friend Dominique (Susan Scott), and the paranoia is overwhelming. The lack of a black-gloved killer and a body count won't attract casual fans, but the plot is tawdry enough to please most.

The film is presented at an aspect ratio of 2.35:1. Extras consist of the theatrical trailer and *Forbidden Screenplays*, a nine-minute interview with legendary screenwriter Ernesto Gastaldi.

BLACK BELLY OF THE TARANTULA (1971)

Any film that features three Bond girls in various states of undress – Barbara Bouchet (*Casino Royale*), Claudine Auger (*Thunderbolt*), and Barbara Bach (*The Spy Who Loved Me*) – and opens with Bouchet getting a nude rub-down is sure to earn more than just a thumb up. However, the feminine pulchritude on display is but a single ingredient in what is one of the finest gialli out there (directed by Paolo Cavara).

Giancarlo Giannini (*Hannibal*, 2001) stars as

Inspector Tellini, a cop on the trail of a black-gloved killer who sticks acupuncture needles deep into the spines of his victims so they're conscious and completely paralyzed as he mutilates their torsos with a knife. Tellini isn't the typical steely-eyed giallo detective, either. Instead, he's full of doubt and self-loathing, and the plot concerns itself with his personal struggle to unmask the maniac after the killer sends a sex film of Tellini and his wife to his police colleagues.

Black Belly of the Tarantula (*La tarantola del ventre nero*) is the most conventional giallo in this set, featuring the nudity, splatter and cruel violence that are the hallmarks of the genre. It ups the ante all around, though, with a rousing mid-film rooftop foot chase that features an unmemorably hilarious "body" planging to the pavement below, and a hyper-violent climax that has to be seen to be believed. To top it all off, the score is one of Ennio Morricone's best. Of the films here, this is the one with the widest appeal.



Black Belly is presented at 1.85:1 and is the only entry in the set with Italian titles. Extras include the theatrical trailer, a TV spot, and a fifteen-minute interview with Lorenzo Daroni, son of the film's producer.

THE FIFTH CORD (1971)

The Fifth Cord is an absolute cracker of a giallo, and the standout film in the lot. Italian actor Franco Nero, best known as the legendary title character in *Django*, and by this time an international celebrity stars as Andrea, an alcoholic, womanizing newspaper reporter assigned to probe the attempted murder of a wealthy young bachelor on the fringes of his social circle. The murderous intrigue begins in earnest when the crippled wife of Andrea's doctor is strangled and thrown down a flight of stairs. As Andrea's investigation uncovers the seedy secrets and bizarre sexual relationships amongst a crowd of seemingly innocuous socialites, his personal and professional lives steadily crumble — all while the murderer strikes inexorably closer.

Nero is a fantastic actor and makes for a classic flawed giallo hero: one who doggedly gets to the bottom of the mystery despite pronounced personal shortcomings. The mystery is engaging and the supporting cast is solid; Mediterranean beauty Selva Mombi is charming as the love interest who seduces Andrea for his drinking, and Wolfgang Preiss is suitably authoritative as the introverted police inspector.

But the greatest strength of *The Fifth Cord* is the cinematography by multiple Academy Award-winner Vittorio Storaro, whose early credits include Dario Argento's highly influential giallo *The Bird with the Crystal Plumage*. He brings a look to the film that makes it a stylistic landmark within any genre. Storaro employs contrast, wide shots, oblique camera angles and hand-held cameras to breathtaking effect, using windows to frame and reflect the complicated relationships between the characters. In addition, Ennio Morricone's exquisite score is appropriately discordant and menacing for the visuals.

The Fifth Cord is presented at 1.85:1. Extras include the theatrical trailer and *Gloriate nero* (*Black Days*), a sixteen-minute featurette containing fascinating interviews with Nero and Storaro.

THE PYJAMA GIRL CASE (1977)

Sounding a little too much like the title of a Nancy Drew book, Flavio Mogherini's *The Pyjama Girl Case* represents a late entry in the genre and an appropriate epilogue to the heyday of the giallo. It's an almost feminist condemnation of the culture of machismo and objectification of women, as well as a cinematic apology for the misogynistic bent of the genre.

Oscar winner Ray Milland (*Dial M for Murder*) stars as Inspector Thompson, a reluctantly retired gunshoe who involves himself in a police investigation when the badly burned body of a

woman clad in yellow pyjamas is found in an abandoned car on an Australian beach. The police are unable to identify the corpse and take the unusual step of putting it on public display in the hope that someone will recognize it. Of course, Thompson's old-school methods clash with the modern policing techniques employed by the lead detective. In a separate plot line, pretty young Glenda (Dalia Di Lazzaro) finds her life increasingly complicated after marrying one of her three lovers, all of whom regard her as little more than a sex object. The two stories come together in a tragic and downbeat climax.

The Pyjama Girl Case is a refreshing take on a genre that had already been well-explored by the time the film was made in the late '70s. It has a unique narrative structure and is one of the few gialli to be based in fact, inspired by the infamous murder of a young woman in Australia in 1934. It's also one of the few works of its genre with any subtlety, touching on the frustration of immigrants in a hostile society, fascist police, domestic abuse and ageism. Despite being perennially dated by Riz Ortolani's pounding disco score, the movie remains relevant.

The film is presented at 1.85:1 and comes with the most extensive set of supplements in this collection. The disc contains the theatrical trailer, a half-hour documentary entitled *The Pyjama Girl Mystery: A True Story of Murder, Obsession and Lies*, and is packaged with an eight-page reproduction of *The Pyjama Girl*, a story reprinted from the first issue of the comic *Tibbo*.

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THE HORROR OF PARTY BEACH (1964)

Starring John Scott, Alice Lyon
and Marilyn Clarke
Directed by Del Tenney
Written by Richard Hilliard,
Ronald Ginetino and Lou Binder
Dark Sky Films

Drive-in outfit American International Pictures may have cornered the market for both horror trash and beach party extravaganzas in the early 1960s, but it was the cash-strapped independents that really capitalized on the two popular genres to create the ultimate teen seaside shock-fests. Probably the best remembered of the lot, low-budget filmmaker Del Tenney's knowingly over-the-top *The Horror of Party Beach* is a deliciously bad tale of sand, surf and slaughter that has gained a reputation as one of horror film's campiest classics.

An unusual project for Tenney, who preferred to dabble in horror films with more gothic flavours, *ThoPB* begins as a leaky barrel of radioactive waste is dumped into a lake, mutating a sunken skull into a googly-eyed, fish-faced monster with a taste for human blood. Nearby, aspiring young scientist Hank (Scott) has arrived at the beach with his increasingly estranged girlfriend Tina (Clarke) for an afternoon of swimming and shimmying to local teen garage band The Del-Aires. But after the fickle Tina makes bedroom eyes at the leader of a biker gang, she goes out for a dip and is promptly butchered by the toxic creature. When a second waterlogged monster wades ashore and the victims start piling up, Hank and his mentor, Dr Gavin (Allan Laurel), set to work discovering a way to stop the rampage.

Shot on the cheap in Stamford, Connecticut and later picked up for theatrical distribution by Twentieth Century Fox, the movie is an unabashed B-film masterpiece

that combines flesh-baring swimsuits, badass bikers, sub-moronic one-liner jokes and gratuitous blood-spattering, all set to The Del-Aires' pier-shaking rock 'n' roll horror anthem *The Zombie Stomp*. But what really sets *The Horror of Party Beach* apart from most B-movie flotsam is the nuclear monstrosities themselves, leading candidates for the most ridiculous screen spoofs ever concocted, and proud of it.

While the killer beasts in similar schlock epics like Roger Corman's *The Creature From the Haunted Sea* often look like dime-store Halloween costumes, it's obvious a great deal of care went into designing these scaly man-fishes. Complete with what looks like floppy pork sausages dangling out of their mouths, these well-constructed mutants belie their goof-ball looks by bloodily devouring an entire sorority of girls at a giggly pajama party, eventually racking up a body count that would make Freddy blush.

When it's not tossing around all this gore and absurdity, however, the film isn't afraid to show its serious side. Perhaps it's the dubbed dialogue or the uncomfortably zoomed close-ups, but an early scene of Tina hitting the bottle and, later, surprisingly sombre TV news reports about the murdered teens, occasionally give the film a slightly grim quality reminiscent of other 1960s indie horror classics like *The Flesh Eaters* (RMI52) and *Carnival of Souls*. Even a too-long comedic bit about a pair of drunks trying to stumble their way home ultimately has a tragic feel about it, and not just because they end up covered in a sloppy mess of Karo syrup and hot dog juice.

Unlike many misguided horror films that



The Horror of Party Beach: Del Tenney's delicious '60s genre mash-up.

attempt to be serious but just wind up silly, Tenney seemed to have the opposite problem – he keeps injecting his lightweight beach monster flick with genuine drama. *ThoPB* headlines a trio of Tenney films recently released by Dark Sky Films, *The Curse of the Living Corpse*, a spookshow about a deceased family member who vows

death on his heirs if they don't follow his will to the letter (also on this DVD), is worth checking out even if it doesn't quite live up to its premise. In addition, released on its own disc, Tenney's earlier Hitchcock-inspired whodunit *Violent Midnight* involves a painter falsely accused of a rash of grisly killings at a girls' dorm. Though neither of these films quite match the calculated lunacy of *The Horror of Party Beach*, it's great to see Dark Sky confirming what most of us already know – that despite his

menge output, Del Tenney is an unjustly forgotten cult horror hero, and a maestro of near-perfect drive-in fare – limp weenies and all.

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"SILVER BULLET, MY EVOLVING LOVE FOR YOU GROWS FASTER THAN THE COARSE HAIRS THAT SPROUT FROM EVERETT MCGILL'S BACK."

MAD THE MUSINGS OF A SCHIZOID CINEPHILE



by Chris Alexander



Silver Bullet

I hate the term "guilty pleasure movie." If a film makes you happy, if it gives you joy and satisfaction and comfort, if it speaks to you, then why must you be consumed with shame? I say, if you blaze with forbidden lust for a flick that curls the collective lips of friends and enemies alike, man up and stand up! Testify! This month, allow me to lay out some love for a movie that never fails to warm my cockles and yet, until this point has been a private passion. A film dismissed by many as tepid pap, and though those who accuse it of such crimes may have a point or two, I could care less. Ladies and gents, at the end of the day there are but two words branded across my quivering lips: *Silver Bullet*.

For those who don't know, here's the skinny: something is wrong in the sleepy town of Tarker's Mill. Seems scores of citizens, from the town drunk to the town slut to the town wife beater

are getting viciously deep-steed by something big, hairy, smelly and mean. That would be the town werewolf, and only the town cripple (future *Lost Boys* heartthrob Corey Haim) — with the aid of the town sister (Anne of Green Gables herself Megan Follows) and the town's loose cannon uncle (the great Gary Busey) — can put the kibosh on the lycanthrope's toothy reign.

Director Daniel Atlas' *Silver Bullet* (1985) is yet another installment in quaint Mayberry-esque monster mayhem from Maine-based master of the macabre Stephen King (who adapted the screenplay from his own story *Cycle of the Werewolf*). And while the picture is massively flawed, and indeed mules much of the visceral elements of the Bernie Wrightson illustrated novella, it retains and almost fetichizes the core King aesthetic: the triumph of innocence over the drooling, hairy menace of blindly sluggish evil.

I love *Silver Bullet* for many reasons, all of them swimming upstream of my usual cinematic leanings. The film has no real graphic violence (though a few kills are pretty meaty), no cannibalism, no structural eccentricities, no dirty sex, no bombastic music, no elements of surrealism, no socio-political undercurrents and no black leather... in fact it's pretty much two shades shy of Walt Disney. *Silver Bullet* instead paints a sweetly detailed portrait of a summer without end, of the gentle pleasures of an old-fashioned beast-on-the-loose tale well told.

The central relationship between siblings Marty and Jane, their volatile antagonism yet quiet affection is always endearing and rings true. I adore Gary Busey's larger than life turn as blustery alcoholic Uncle Red, who worships his paraplegic nephew more than anything on the face of the earth, and I love the concept of the gas-guzzling turbocharged wheelchair he builds to make Marty fly Hell. I even have a soft spot for Carlo (Aven, E.T.) Rambaldi's lame special effects (as the werewolf suit creator).

From the opening shot of the moon to the first few strains of Jay Chattaway's charming, sentimental yet frightening score to the final pulse-pounding bullet down the air vent showdown, *Silver Bullet* is a constant reminder as to why I fell in love with horror to begin with. For beneath all my pseudo-intellectual genre philosophizing, sneering cynicism and highbrow/lowbrow pretensions, I still remain that little boy who dreams of worlds bigger than myself — and still holds the belief that I have the power to slay the monster in the closet.

Guilty Pleasure? Fuck that. *Silver Bullet*, my evolving love for you grows faster than the coarse hairs that sprout from Everett McGill's back. Oops, I just gave away the identity of the werewolf, the film's dramatic thrust and its only real mystery. But since only a jabbering moron couldn't guess that the preacher is the baddest from frame one, I don't feel nury a twinge of regret. Alexander, affectionately out. **X**

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IN THIS ISSUE!

CINEMA PANOPTICUM
by Thomas Ott Fantagraphics

HELLBLAZER: LADY CONSTANTINE
by Andy Diggle and Goran Sudzuka DC/Vertigo

CRIMINAL MACHINERY: FEAT OF CLAY
by Steve Niles and Kyle Heitz Dark Horse

**VAMPIRELLA:
THE MORRISON/MILLAR COLLECTION**
by Ernst Morrison, Mark Millar et al. Harris

WORMWOOD: GENTLEMAN CORPSE #9
by Ben Tempelmeister IDW

ZOMBIE TALES: THE DEAD #1
by various Boom! Studios

Clutching a handful of coins, a young girl (known only as "The Girl") jumps the fence of a ramshackle carnival. Unable to afford even the merry-go-round, she finds herself alone in a shadowy exhibit labelled Cinema Panopticum, where five private viewing booths are arranged in a circle. Coin by coin, screen by screen, she observes the inexorable and inevitable horrors of *The Hotel*, *The Champion*, *The Experiment*, *The Prophet* and... ah, but that is getting ahead by one fateful reel too many.

Music is said to be the universal language. Horror – real, absolute, maddening horror – is similar in its universality. It defies description and can only be processed, if at all, via the senses, and primarily by that sense upon which humans rely the most: vision. Consider Swiss multimedia artist Thomas Ott to be a true visionary. Operating sporadically in the medium since 1985, Ott has authored over a dozen comic anthologies. The latest, *Cinema Panopticum* (Fantagraphics), is arguably his finest and most cohesive. Over the past two decades his noirish, methodical and atmospheric comics have maintained three core consistencies: they are horror-influenced, they are rendered in scratchboard (similar to woodcut), and they are wordless.

"I scratch away the black surface of cardboard with a Japanese knife until the white comes out underneath. That means that I draw light into blackness," the reclusive, non-English-speaking artist explains in his retrospective *TOTT: Illustrations 1985-2001* (Edition Moderne).

In terms of the admittedly limiting qualification of Ott's comics being wordless, "limitations can be positive," he emphasizes in the interview "The

more an artist restricts himself, the more he can concentrate on what he actually wants to express and the closer he gets to the essence of his message."

His unique stories reveal in Franz Kafka's existential horrors paired with Ray Bradbury's gift for surprise endings. A Wrinkled Tragedy in 1989's *Tales of Error* finds plastic surgery cutting far deeper than the skin. In 1993's *Greetings from Hellville*, *The Job* features a callous assassination that allows its contractor to become, for lack of a better term, normal. *The Millionaire* [sic] in 2002's *Dead End* follows a cursed briefcase – those who obtain it do so via murder, and it never stays with one owner long.

Which brings us to *Cinema Panopticum*. Each of its five framed tales are typically twisted. For example, *The Hotel* proves to be the human

equivalent of a roach trap, and *The Prophet* features a picketing Bible-thumper whose promise that the end is nigh comes true when a spaceship blows up the earth, after taking him captive. It's no surprise to eventually learn that *The Girl* is not just the witness to the shows, but also the protagonist in the final reel, called *The Girl*, where she witnesses herself – a fitting ending to a deliciously absurd cycle.



Cinema Panopticum's The Experiment: A real eye (or eight) for absurdist horror.

"My characters are pure surfaces of projection," Ott points out, "supposed to make readers say to themselves, 'That's me, there's no way out – where am I going to end up?'"

Where exactly *The Girl* ends up is never known, though she is seen fleeing the tent; whether she escapes the dark carnival is a matter of choice for the reader. Ott graciously refrains from opining: "Waking up from a nightmare gives you a real feeling of release. After you read my books, you can also close them and put them away."

Samples of Thomas Ott and almost 100 other artists at Comic Without Words can be found online at: bugpowder.com/andy/comix ohne Worte.html.



QUICK CUTS

I can't fault DC-exclusive writer Andy Diggle for his plots - *Swamp Thing*, *The Losers* and *Adam Strange* have all been perfectly paced, and *Hellblazer*: *Lady Constantine* is probably the best thing he's done to date. Pitting John Constantine's 18th-century ancestor against Pandora and Pandora's Box - now that really is clever. I just wish that Diggle's characters ring truer. For an elemental world power, *Swamp Thing* (who shows up here) is admittedly well deployed, but he's thick as a tree trunk, and not in a complimentary way. As for the addition of the momentum-detracting child sidekick "Mouse", powerful twist ending notwithstanding, well, let's just say that *Hellblazer* books should never use kid gloves.

It's taken a half-dozen decent enough efforts, but prolific horror comic writer Steve Niles has found the right artist for his *Criminal Macabre* stories about oh-so-jaded and eminently Sam Spaded monster hunter Cal McDonald. A last one-shot, *Fear of Clay* pairs Niles with Kyle Hotz to great success. It doesn't hurt that the story features a golem, and that Hotz previously worked on Marvel's *Moon-Thing*. It also doesn't hurt that this is one of Niles' best McDonald stories, period. One small criticism: in my experience, hot women don't hit on guys who look like they've been run over by a lawnmower (trust me). McDonald's a monster magnet, sure, but a chick magnet? Not when he's sporting a

three-pack of steri-strips on his pummelled puss, he ain't.

Grant Morrison zealots (make that "fans") and Mark Millar critics (make that "Grant Morrison fans") will find plenty in this pair's recently anthologized late-'90s work on *Vampirella* that bites, in both the good and bad senses of the word. Reading these seven-and-a-half issues offers a fascinating study of strong writers struggling with fetters - face it, skimpy

swimwear aside, Harris' prima pin-up character offers its creators very little room to manœuvre. But just as Mike Carey proved in his own recent revamp of the character (pun intended, of course), an open mind will yield creative solutions. Morrison's bullets with crosses etched into their casings? I guarantee you, the screenwriters of the *Underworld* and *Blade* franchises are jealous. So, buyer beware - but be entertained *overall, too.

The Goon. *Fear Agent*. *Zombie King*. *Next Wave*. There's never been a better time than now for comic book fans who like their humour black and their horror messy. Originally serialized in *Lo-Fi* magazine (hence its numbering as issue #0), the inaugural arc of Ben Templesmith's *Wormwood: Gentleman Corpse* is a gut-buster of a story, figuratively and literally. Leroy's Special Brew finds the titular tough ghoul drinking piss-water beer in a strip club when all inter-dimensional demonic hell breaks loose. Think of *Wormwood* and his robot companion Mr. Pendulum in Han Solo and Chewbacca terms and you're partway there; add a dose of Warren Ellis-style asshole to the former



and Eric Powell-style wisecracks to the latter you're closer. Hearty congratulations to artist/writer Templesmith for proving that he really can spin his own stories, and hearty congratulations for producing hands-down his finest horror art ever.

Anthologies tend to be tricky endeavours, but BOOM!'s *Zombie Tales: The Dead* is a twisty one. Five stories and as many surprise endings - well done, team! Highlights are many, but fans of Bill Thompson's Eisner-winning pet horror shorts (*Dark Horse Book of Hauntings*) will be driven to tears by Johanna Stokes's *Zombies* (yup, with two O's). Michael Alan Nelsen pits Christianity against zombism to truly resurrectionist results, while the interior monologue of Keith Giffen's *Deepest Meat* might stand as the only truly successful attempt at rationalizing the bloodlust of the walking dead. Eat it up. ☠



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Author Laudati (who is a monster-maker by trade) delivers a solid first novel, using his knowledge of creature animation to full advantage on the printed page. 'Tis a bloody good show. I'd like to see what he comes up with next.

— Nick Carr, The Horror Fiction Review

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shock june/january: a smorgasbord of horror

Matt Farley, Charles Roxburgh
and Thomas Scalzo
(Universe)

Sweet merciful Jesus, one look at the horrendous cover of this unappealingly named book and I wanted to throw it into the fire. But since I almost always adhere to the "Don't judge a book..." philosophy, I gave it a shot, and I'm really glad I did because *Shock June/January: A Smorgasbord of Horror* is a hoot.

On the surface, authors Matt Farley, Charles Roxburgh and Thomas Scalzo's hefty tome is a second-rate horror film reference book, but it's also a whole lot more. Basically, the three scribes have, over the years, formed a sort of nerdy secret society that culminates in what they call "Shock" sleepover parties. After selecting the lowest of B titles from their local video store, the boys get together for a straight-on, no sleep, 48-hour horror movie marathon; the only rule being that, no matter how awful, they have to watch every picture to the bitter end. Then, following each marathon the decadent cineastes write an essay about each film. These hilarious overviews don't just convey their feelings about the pictures, they also reflect their delirious caffeine-affected, sleep-deprived states of mind.

Any horror fan who has ever indulged in



the sheer joy of the all-for-one-and-one-for-all camaraderie of the all-night movie marathon will get a kick out of this endearing, funny, warm and thoroughly original work. Everything from Gore-Met fave *Rituals* and Paul Naschy's *People Who Own the Dark* to the *CatCon* classic *Federal Home* are examined, and it's refreshing to read non-academic reviews written by thrill-seeking filmgoers. Hell, they even ladle awards on the best (and the best of the worst) titles. But, sadly, I fear that, due to the absolutely shit-ass cover art, no one in their right mind will buy *Shock June/January*.

Memo to Farley, Roxburgh and Scalzo... next time hire Gary Pullen

Chris Alexander

ghosts of new york

Susan Blackhall
Thunder Bay Press

Ghosts. Enter any bookstore and you'll find dozens of volumes on them. And despite all our hard science and established fact, belief in them hasn't waned. According to Susan Blackhall, author of the sleek and sexy hardback *Ghosts of New York*, belief in spectres has actually increased thirteen percent in the last decade, with 38 percent of Americans now readily accepting the notion of restless spirits.

But despite all the musing Blackhall does



about why the places in her book are haunted or just plain "evil", if you will, she offers no more proof in *Ghosts of New York* than you'd expect in any other book of its ilk. In fact, her argument centres squarely on if so many reputable people have claimed to have seen something, then there must be something to their claims.

That repetitive sentiment may weary readers as they delve into 28 of the Big Apple's most prominent and frequently reported haunted hot spots, but there's much to praise here as well. Despite all the conjecture, this volume is less about why ghosts haunt and more about the locales that are suspected of being haunted (including what you're likely to see/hear/experience) — making this an excellent, though awkward and oversized, guide to spooky New York.

Organized geographically, Blackhall makes it relatively easy for anyone to plan their own ghost tour of the city. Additionally the insight into the lives and histories of the ghosts suspected of the various hauntings offers up more background than a mere visit to a location would likely uncover. Regular *Rue Morgue* readers will even recognize places like Curnley's and the One If By Land, Two If By Sea restaurant from our recent "The Ghost of Greenwich Village" travelogue (*RM* 52).

And while Blackhall's writing tends toward the pedestrian and poses many

The Grim Reader

THE CONQUEROR WORMS

Brian Keene
Lulu Press

Brian Keene pays homage to the pulps in this intimate and engrossing tale of a biblical-style flood and the giant creatures that rise from depths of the earth and oceans to feast on us. *Worms* is a marked departure from Keene's previous novel-length work, though fans may recognize certain scenes from a short story that previously appeared in *Fear of Gravity*.



Monica S. Kuebler

TARRA KHAOSH: BROSSAKI TALES OF THE PRIMAL LAND, VOLUME 2

Brian Lumley
Tor Books

In this second volume of *Primal Lands* tales, which take place in ancient Theem'hira, the action focuses on a barbarian named Tarra Khosh. In Khosh's quest for treasure, however, he is thwarted by various thieves, golden idols, and elder gods. These are fun, but not particularly original, adventure stories.

Brett Alexander Savory



BLOOD: THE LAST VAMPIRE: NIGHT OF THE BEASTS

Mamoru Oshii
OH Press

How do you manage to make an anime-inspired action story about butchering monsters boring? Well, this sequel to *Blood: The Last Vampire* manages to do just that by convoluting the vampire-killing plot with incredibly verbose philosophical asides, a slow-moving storyline and a shaky English translation. Too much talk, not enough killy.



Dawn Deler

HORROR, FANTASY & SCI-FI MOVIE PAPERBACK GUIDE

Gordon Reid
Morrow Books

This 183-page price guide to genre movie tie-in books compiles titles from their inception to 1998. The guide is ordered alphabetically by title and includes only the most basic information about the original films, their tie-in paperbacks and various print editions. For enthusiasts only.



Monica S. Kuebler

Ghosts of New York: The room where Gertrude Todwell died in 1933, her ghost is said to haunt 29 East Fourth St. to this day.

rhetorical questions (yet never fully explores the ideas they propose), the information is here and so are a glorious selection of captioned photographs. Not of orbs and mists and supposed ectoplasm as in so many other ghost books, but actual historic — many dating back more than 100 years — photographs and illustrations of the city, people and places discussed within.

Packaged as a coffee-table tome, but more useful as a guide book, *Ghosts of New York* suffers from an identity crisis. However, if ghost hunting in one of America's oldest cities is something that appeals to you, there are a lot worse places you could start.

Monica S. Kuebler

Encyclopedia of the undead: A field guide to the creatures that cannot rest in peace

Dr. Bob Curran
New Page Books

My dictionary defines encyclopedia as a book with info on many subjects presented in alphabetical order. A field guide tends to identify flora and fauna in their natural environment. So a book with tons of facts and stories about creatures in their supernatural environment, organized in loose chronological order, doesn't really qualify as either. Call me a stickler, but that's my main problem with this cluttered and unfocused reference guide to the undead.

I have no doubt that Dr. Bob has an encyclopedic knowledge of his subjects. But when wading through *Encyclopedia of the Undead* it feels like he's simply showing off

everything he knows about everything with little thought to the reader.

There are five chapters: vampires, werewolves; zombies and voodoo; ghouls and goblins; and the terrors of H.P. Lovecraft. (The latter explores whether or not Lovecraft's work wasn't actually fictional!) Each section details examples from myth, folklore, and history (with cursory bits from film and literature) of big baddies that simply refuse to give up the ghost. There's some great stuff in here, particularly accounts of real people such as the New Orleans Voodoo Queens and I'll lycan wannabe Jean Grenier, the last suspected loup-garou to be tried in France in the early 17th century, but you really have to work for it. The book is structured so that each entry references another, meaning if you don't read the entire chapter you'll get lost. Unfortunately, he's so boring and repetitive, I didn't want to curl up with Dr. Bob.

Worse perhaps are the whack of intangible entries: supposed this, alleged that, rumours, speculation, etc. Granted, folklore is steeped in "what if?", but if he can't even confirm the hard facts about book sales or film history, I wonder what else he's guessing at. OK, that's not really the worst thing. That would be the book's (lack of) design. The layout looks like a manuscript draft. And some cornball fantasy artwork aside, there are no visuals — another keystone of a true encyclopedia.

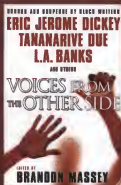
There are countless tomes devoted to this material that are better written and more beautifully illustrated. This one should be buried. And stay buried.

Lisa Ladouceur



Ninth Circle Press
Dark Dreams II, a horror anthology solely featuring the works of black authors, aspires to bring a new voice to a genre dominated by middle-aged white men

BLACKEST IMAGES



by Monica S. Kuebler

Horror literature is primarily a white man's world, meaning that the majority of tales penned and published are written by Caucasian males. Sure, the occasional Anne Rice, Nancy Collins or Kathie Kaja comes along to shake up the establishment, but for the most part that's about all that can be expected. This disparity prompted writer/editor Brandon Massey to create *Dark Dreams* in 2004, a critically acclaimed anthology featuring short horror fiction from many of today's most talented under-the-radar black genre scribes. This spring he followed it up with a sequel, *Dark Dreams II: Voices From The Other Side* (DaFina Books).

"It grew primarily out of my desire to show readers that black writers are just as capable of writing horror as anyone else," Massey tells Rue Morgue. "The horror genre simply hasn't had much diversity. I wanted to change that by bringing works by black writers to the table – stories that deliver on, and even surpass, what readers of a horror collection expect, regardless of race."

To that end, *Dark Dreams II* boasts more variety in its seventeen tales than one would find in a more typical genre anthology. The stories travel the globe, careen through history and explore different belief systems (including the teachings of the Qur'an) to create palpable suspense and haunting dread. Some tales are gory, like Pickey Windel George's cannibal climax in Good 'Nough To Eat, while others are creepy and genuinely

unsettling (like *The Arrangements* by Patricia E. Canterbury). Additionally, there's innovative and ultimately surprising serial killer fare from Tananarive Due and Eric Jerome Dickey, while authors like L.A. Banks and Maurice Broaddus choose to tackle lycanism and other supernatural creatures.

Massey, a lifelong fan of the genre and established writer in his own right, faced more than just the usual challenges when editing this collection. "As an editor (even as a writer) your instinct for what is good and acceptable is completely subjective. Sometimes I had to turn down stories by writers that I like, because their stories just didn't work for me. I've learned that I have to trust my instinct, though, and letting my instinct guide me in the selection of these stories was the most daunting task."

After all, Massey not only wanted the book to contain thought-provoking, original tales that kept him turning the pages, but he also wanted the collection to serve as an inspiration for other writers of colour to try their hand at penning horror.

"To be honest, African American writers are not encouraged or expected to write horror," he explains about why there are so few prominent black genre authors. "You're expected to write relationship/sista girl fiction, street fiction, inspirational fiction, or erotica – genres that are hot right now in the 'African American' market. So I

think that many writers worry that if they sit down to write horror, they won't be accepted." He goes on to suggest that black horror authors may find themselves accused of destroying certain cultural values, even though supernatural beliefs are widespread within the community and, as such, provide a rich canvas of mythology to work from.

"We have our stories of ghosts and people who work roots and the evil eye, those born with yells and gifted with second sight – we have more superstitions than you can shake a stick at," says Massey.

Some of these themes are reflected in tales like Lawana Holland-Moore's *Breath Of Life* that's set in Senegambia in 1958 and follows Oumar, a Ou'ranic scholar sent by a council of elders to defeat a djinn (a malevolent shapeshifter from Muslim mythology) that has been terrorizing the village.

Massey is currently editing *Dark Dreams III* (in stores Spring 2007), gearing up for the release of his own short story collection, *Twisted Tales* (in June) and reading his fourth novel, *The Other Brother*, for July. When asked if the tales in *Dark Dreams II* embody the black experience, he allows, "The stories in this collection, some more so than others, are drenched in the black experience, because the black experience is the human experience. Joy, pain, fear, love, desire, hope, despair, happiness – all of us, regardless of the colour of our skin, experience these emotions. The race of the characters and their particular cultural situations are just the outer wrappings of the package. Pull them away – as any good story will do – and you discover the universal human heart within." ■



poe's Lighthouse

Christopher Conlon, ed.
Cemetery Dance Publications

Terminally short of cash, often between houses, and perpetually on the verge of nervous collapse, Edgar Allan Poe did not leave much unpublished work behind when he died in 1849. It was of great interest to fans and scholars, then, when an unfinished story of Poe's was published in a scholarly journal by Thomas O. Mabbott in 1942.

That four-page story fragment, which consists of a series of diary entries from a novice lighthouse keeper with an obsessive need for privacy, is the basis for the new short story anthology *Poe's Lighthouse*. In his introduction, editor Conlon explains that the contributors were free to write whatever they wanted, so long as their stories could be considered genuine collaborations, "utilizing at least some of Poe's own words from the fragment along with its characters, themes, or images."



With over twenty contributors, you would expect a certain amount of repetition, a few too many easy variations on Poe's plot themes of madness, isolation, sin, and the fleeting pleasures of creative expression. But the open-ended quality of the story fragment set the authors often in wildly different directions, resulting in everything from straight-up homages that incorporate Poe's words to postmodern takes on the Master and his influence on horror fiction. There's even a magic realist story about a talking cat.

The best tales stay true to Poe's themes without trying to barge in on the territory that he irrevocably marked as his personal domain. John Shirley's *Blind Eye* gets at these through Poe's greatest disciple, H.P. Lovecraft, in a story about a man drawn mad by the penetrating powers of the lighthouse's democratically endowed reflecting mirror. literary Thru's *The Seventh Day* incorporates Buddhist theology to tell the tale of a man paying a dear price for his crimes as a renowned judge, while Deep Into *The Darkless Peering* by Elizabeth Engstrom dabbles with biographical details from Poe's tragic life to deliver an effective and suit twist ending to the fragment.

Of course, some of the stories in *Poe's Lighthouse* expectedly veer into the plain silly and self-indulgent, but they are never boring and just might inspire the reader to trade their own licks with the genre's most accomplished virtuoso.

James Grainger

The Link Richard Matheson Gauntlet Press

One of a select few genre writers able to cross seamlessly between prose and visual mediums, Richard Matheson has received acclaim for his work in short stories, novels, film and television alike. That's crucial to understanding the never-before-published *The Link*, a television proposal originally written for ABC in the 1970s.

Matheson plus miniseries probably looked like a sure winner then; small-screen epics like *Roots* and *Shogun* were doing for network ratings what radiation did for *Godzilla*, and the Matheson-scripted *Night Stalker* movie-of-the-week had left all previous viewing records choking on its dust just a few years earlier. Sadly, executives cooled on the idea after reading his massive outline (clocking in at a whopping 557 pages), filling the hours with *Charlie's Angels* and *The Love Boat* instead.

The Link follows the ghetto-trotting exploits of a team of paranormal researchers investigating various psychic and related phenomena, a premise that wasn't much fresher then than it is now. It's Matheson's excellent characterization that, even in this rough form, distinguishes the piece, particularly psychic-in-denial Robert Allright and irritated-he's-psychic Teddie Berger (a character whose confrontational demeanor seems based on Matheson's long-time friend Harlan Ellison).

Although eventually developing a plot of its own, the set-up is essentially a device to dramatize a series of fictional and factual ("factual" being relative) psychic events throughout history, brushing every paranormal touchstone from Edgar Cayce to Uri Geller-style spoon-benders and KGB remote viewers along the way, as well as squeezing in Bigfoot, Jack The Ripper, Lemuria, and the Titanic disaster for good measure.

By its very nature — essentially an unrevised screen treatment, albeit a very long, detailed one — this isn't Matheson's best work, and the present tense, almost stream-of-consciousness quality of the prose may alienate readers unaccustomed to reading them. But fans of Matheson will relish the opportunity to experience the writer fleshing out ideas new and old (the scientific investigation of the supernatural in particular evokes *Hell House*) on the page, and to recover some sense of an opportunity missed.

Joseph O'Brien



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WARNING. TRAVELOGUE OF TERROR

LOVECRAFT'S PROVIDENCE

Providence, Rhode Island
by Sam Castella

Providence, Rhode Island, is the little brother of a larger, better-known city an hour to its north – Boston. And while Boston has tall buildings and tall literary reputations – Nathaniel Hawthorne, Louisa May Alcott, and Robert Lowell, among others all lived there – Providence grew from its ocean-salted soil a literary horror titan that its genteel sibling could never have stomached: Howard Phillips Lovecraft.

Lovecraft lived in Providence for 42 of his 47 years and you can still see faint tracings of his fiction in the people, in the craggy cliffs, and in the pungent ocean lining 400 miles of the state. But much of what Lovecraft saw on his frequent walks through Providence is gone now, of course, swept away by modernity, and sadly, the city is doing virtually nothing to keep the horror icon's legacy from being swept away with it. There is no museum dedicated to the city's most famous writer, and no plaques adorning his homes. However, one particular pocket of the city still boasts eerie shadows cast by the late great Lovecraft, which can only be seen when viewed from up close.

Luckily for intrepid visitors, that area isn't very big. Lovecraft's grave, and the hospital where his

parents died, is less than three miles from the house where he was born. In fact, he lived most of his life within a five-mile radius, making a walking tour of Lovecraft's Providence a day's activity. There is no ideal map to guide you through these sites, though a few specimens are available online (including hplovecraft.com/creation/sites/walktour.asp), your best bet is to use the addresses listed here and chart your own journey through the murky past of Providence.

My tour began at 598 Angell St. (Lovecraft was born at 454 Angell St. and lived there briefly, but that house was torn down in 1961). Young Howard and his mother moved to this boxy home on the city's quiet, intellectual East Side when he was four, after the death of his grandfather and his father's entrance into the hospital where he died. Unfortunately the inheritance left to them couldn't sustain their standard of living and the remaining members of the Lovecraft family were forced down the social ladder into this two-family home. The house itself, with its squat bulk dwarfing neighbouring homes, seems too plain to suit the literary reputation of its former resident. And like many houses in Providence, it has been converted into apartments. Nevertheless, it was here that Lovecraft penned his early stories during his twenty-year stay, tales that include *Beyond The Wall Of Sleep* and *Herbert West – Reanimator*. He finally left this house behind when he married and moved to New York.

Lovecraft's marriage failed after only two years, though, and upon his return, he took up residence at 10 Barnes St. The house, which borders the Brown University campus, is a largely uphill walk of less than 30 minutes from 598 Angell St. Its detailed roofing and trim gives it an aged air that better befits the writer who once dwelled there. Also converted to apartments, it has small balconies outside its second-floor windows and a web of electric and phone lines running along its wide, flat face. Lovecraft wrote some of his most famous stories here, including *The Call Of Cthulhu*, *The Dunwich Horror*, and *The Shadow Over Innsmouth*. He evidently liked the location (or perhaps disliked it), as he placed one of the charac-

ters from *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* here.

A five-block walk around the outskirts of Brown University brings you to the last house Lovecraft lived in: 66 College St. (since moved a few blocks away to 65 Prospect St.). This clapboard house, which belonged to his aunt, is square and white, bearing a historic marker that declares it the Samuel Mumford House (Mumford was a prominent doctor in the area in the mid-1800s).

For a look at the author's actual work, one needs to visit the university campus itself. After Lovecraft's death in 1937, his papers were donated to Brown University. Brown's John Hay Library (20 Prospect St.), which sat in front of College St. in Lovecraft's day and remains just a few blocks away, houses a large collection of his manuscripts and letters. HPL was an avid letter writer, estimated to have penned an astounding 87,500 letters in his lifetime.

The collection is open 9AM to 5PM, Monday through Friday, with one caveat: the general public can only view copies, a provision taken to maintain the aging documents' quality. However, researchers and those with special permission can view the originals. After getting the green light, a librarian brought me into a wooden book-shelf-lined research room with high ceilings. She disappeared for a moment and returned with a large folder: Lovecraft's handwritten manuscript for *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*.

It's appropriately archaic: brittle, yellowing pages are covered in a cursive script and black ink, heavy with corrections and revisions. The author's pages are tangles of words and masses of paragraphs crossed out, with slightly sloping text characteristic of older generations. Words are randomly capitalized or thickened, the crosses of T's elongated, and even in their declining condition, the manuscripts are breathtaking to behold.

One of the few more obvious remnants of Lovecraft is a memorial plaque that sits just north of the entrance as you exit the library. Mounted on a stone, it bears a few verses from an uninspired Lovecraft poem mythologizing his Providence youth. If you're at the Hay, you may want to walk the extra twenty feet to see it.



The markers that no fan of the writer can miss, though, are Lovecraft's graves. Yes, that's graves – plural. There are, in fact, two markers bearing Lovecraft's name in Swan Point Cemetery (585 Blackstone Blvd.).

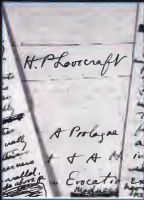
The rolling 200-acre cemetery sits on a leisurely, curving street of large homes with a wide, tree-lined park and a walking path down its centre, less than three miles from HPL's birthplace. The larger of the memorials is a modest obelisk, bearing the family name Phillips. This marker is located at Avenue B, Group 276, which can be found, roughly, by heading into the cemetery, bearing around curves, and ending at a T intersection. The obelisk seemed too humble to some HPL fans, though, who placed a second marker next to it in 1977. That small slab, its face angled towards the sky, bears a portentous quote from one of Lovecraft's letters: "I am Providence."

The area around the graves is a ragged celebration of the writer, with graffiti carved into nearby trees, quotes from his stories sometimes written on the headstones, and letters left to the dark dreamer. The man himself, of course, is buried beneath only one marker – his family's – which is knowledge lost on some visitors. In 1996, cemetery attendants found a three-foot hole and footprints in front of the false gravestone. Confusion may have foiled an attempted grave robbery.

If you decide to visit Providence in March or April, you may want to attend one of the nearly annual "Services of Tribute" held by devotees at the graves. The services, organized by the H.P. Lovecraft Commemorative Activities Committee (call 401-732-4870 for details), include readings of his work and the works of other writers.

If you'd prefer a guided tour, contact the Providence Preservation Society (401-831-7440, ppsr.org) for its walking tours of Lovecraftian sites. Though the tours have been suspended recently due to the Society's busy schedule, they will likely make a comeback in 2007. They're held around Lovecraft's birthday (August 20th) and at Halloween, when they are particularly popular. You'll visit the sites listed here, as well as some others, on the 90-minute tour.

However you tour Providence, you'll gain insight into Lovecraft and his writing. By seeing the city that shaped him, I began to understand his affinity for charming old New England, and to



Where Lovecraft loitered: (opposite) 598 Angel Street and an early portrait of H.P. Lovecraft, and (above clockwise) 10 Barnes Street, the author's signature on an early manuscript, and the Phillips family obelisk.

some extent his xenophobia. Rhode Island is still a very insular place – as evidenced by its reluctance to capitalize on Lovecraft-themed tourism, and certainly not the kind of place one suspects would be particularly welcoming to outsiders back in the author's day. It is, of course, a se-

live air that appropriately preserves a certain Lovecraftian mystery. The gentleman from Providence may be gone nearly 70 years, but his muse lingers on like salt in the chilly seaside breeze.



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DINNER'S READY! THE GORE-MET

This issue, *The Gore-Met* pecks away at *KatieBird* director Justin Paul Ritter.



KatieBird: Kevin (Jun Hee Lee) has some impromptu dentistry done.

Roll out all the esoteric excuses you like – the reason we watch horror films is because we want to see fucked-up shit. We gravitate towards the genre because we have an innate desire to stare madness and death in the eye, as vicariously as we can. So many films promise this experience; so few deliver.

KatieBird **Certifiable Crazy Person*, however, is the uncomfortable glimpse into the human abyss that its title doesn't necessarily suggest. Maverick writer/director Justin Paul Ritter's nuanced debut features the titular character (played as a child by Nicole Jarvis, as a teen by Taylor M. Dooley, and as an adult by Helene Udy) as she recounts her introduction to serial murder at the hands of her recently deceased father (Lee Perkins) – all while she fucks, rips the teeth out of, and cuts the face off her equally loathsome psychoanalyst (Todd Gordon).

Played out across a screen of split frames to a minimalist, discordant score reminiscent of the metallic improvisation of early-'70s King Crimson, it's a unique mix of the smouldering intensity of Lucky McKee's *May* (*RMP* 34) and the intimate agony of Douglas Buck's *Cutting Moments* (1997). With *KatieBird* now available on an excellent DVD from Heretic Films, Ritter talks about his purposefully abrasive film.

Was your intention with this film to shock audiences, or is there a deeper meaning?

KatieBird was meant to shock, but at the same time, I always had this crazy idea that if we were to really make something beautiful out of this sick and twisted story, we might actually draw in people who would never even consider watching a typical gorefest. Lots of people avoid horror movies because of the typical pitfalls, bad acting, poor cinematography, lack of vision, etc. I wanted *KatieBird* to be something unique to the genre that would combine beautiful imagery, intensely dramatic performances, heinous amounts of gore and wildly original direction. Underneath it all would be the driving message that even the most depraved and microscopic movie can be well crafted and dramatically compelling if the people responsible for the project are willing to make the emotional investment.

The torture scenes are excruciating to watch; why the teeth?

I'd really have to give all the credit to my subconscious. I've always hated going to the dentist, and I'm always having nightmares related to losing my teeth; these dreams are absolutely appalling and terrifying, with first one tooth falling out, then another, then another, until soon all my teeth are crumbling into tiny bits and I begin to choke on them... The script contained many more small moments of torture including pinching, hair pulling, scratching, biting, etc., plus there were plans for a much more graphic finale,

but in the end, we only had a handful of days to shoot this thing and we needed to focus on capturing the most important elements.

***KatieBird* has a unique look, almost like a comic book. What inspired this?**

From a creative standpoint I really wanted this movie to be a completely crazy trip that would reflect the fractured way of thinking in which a developing serial killer might view the world. By splitting the frames and consequently expanding moments of time, we are forced to see more of something than we might want to – and I don't mean just the gore! *KatieBird* was just featured in the latest issue of *American Cinematographer*, which is absolutely amazing. I mean, how many other indie slasher flicks have appeared in what many consider the most prestigious technical magazine in the biz?

How have audiences reacted to such a challenging film?

Half of the people love it; half of the people hate it. *KatieBird* is a movie that was designed to get a reaction from people. We always knew that there would be a certain section of the population that just wouldn't have the patience for the methodical nature of the movie. We also knew that certain people would never be able to sit through the multipanelling or the omnipresent score, so when assessing the public response it is hard to say whether we've been successful. ☹

KatieBird, KatieBird, how do I love thee? Let me count the scars...



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Nathan Barr
VARESE SARABANDE

Although his score for *Cabin Fever* relied on a theme by Angelo Badalamenti, for Eli Roth's latest sado-thriller, Nathan Barr has free reign to use his own material, and the result is a wickedly tongue-in-cheek horror score, harking back to the warm but unsettling vibrato textures that seethed from Bernard Herrmann's own string-saturated thriller soundtracks. The 41-minute album feels oddly short, but the score samples definitely mirror the film's radical tonal shift: the first part follows sex-starved American tourists visiting the ultimate hands-on spa (deliberately scored with genteel passages, plus a soothing female vocal), while the second part shocks along to scenes of mounting torture (evoked by sonorous orchestral and ambient timbres), and moments of desperate escape (conveyed through sharp orchestral clusters). A cheeky, grim little gem. **MRH** ***



EFFECTS

Soundtrack

John Harrison

LA-LA LINGO RECORDS

In the early 1980s, before John Harrison was busy giving aural wet

willies with *Creepshow* and *Day of the Dead*, he was in Pittsburgh wearing many different hats on a low-budget labour of love horror flick called *Effects* (starring himself, Tom Savini and Day's Joe Pilato). Harrison's early score efforts are minimalist, and reportedly improvised, as he splashes around sounds of flanged-out piano and echoing strings, while thick, dirty pulsations give way to experiments in smooth funk and surreal soft jazz. A bonus cut features a gradual cacophony of honking brass that had me imagining exploding ducks. In terms of pure shivers *Effects* certainly ain't *Creepshow* but it's about ten times weirder and worth digging up if you can actually find it. (Limited to 1500 copies.) **TD** *** 1/2



KING KONG VS. GODZILLA

Soundtrack

Akira Ifukube

LA-LA LINGO RECORDS

Vintage *Godzilla* music has long been available as pricey and limited Japanese releases, so this album is particularly important for being one of the first American CDs to feature a full *Godzilla* score. Known as the only "classic" *Godzilla* film released in true stereo, the CD features 70 minutes from *King Kong vs. Godzilla*, including plenty of theme variations, some source cues (one jazz, the other a military march), and alternate stems of the film's Main Title track. Ifukube's score is full of brash swagger, and ranks as one

of the best monster movie scores of the period. The topper is a completely insane main theme, involving hysterical chanting, primal percussion, and brass surges. A fun album with solid liner notes.

MRH ***



VAMPYROS LESBOS SEXADELIC DANCE PARTY

Soundtrack

Siegfried Schwab and Manfred Hubler

CRIPPLED DICK

Vampyros Lesbos, Jess Franco's classic and influential slice of '70s bloodsucker erotica, has endured

for many reasons, chief among them the trashy, ass-shakin' psychedelic soundtrack by composers Siegfried Schwab and Manfred Hubler. Bootlegs of the score floated around the Eurotrash underground for years until Toni Schifer, cineaste and head of German-based Eurogroove soundtrack reissue label Crippled Dick, released the wild score on vinyl in 1994. The disc, which was retitled *Vampyros Lesbos Sexadelic Dance Party*, was a cult and international DJ club hit. Crippled Dick has now remastered and reissued the record on CD, with the addition of two extra tracks and a reproduction of the saucy full-colour liner notes. The unusual score combines throbbing bass lines, laughing sitars, trippy beats, breathy female voices and growling guitars – a strange but cool complement to madness, murder and lesbian vampires.

CA ***



ROB ZOMBIE

Educated Horses

GEFFEN

Having turned 40 this year, Rob Zombie is all grown up. On *Educated Horses*, a reference to his circus-influenced childhood, he's dropped much of the spookshow theatrics for a more stripped down, straight-ahead album (note the monster makeup-free cover). His first release in five years still grooves to that trademark drone "it" swagger, though, and there are some decadent production touches, like the orchestral cues on *Ride* and orgasmic moans on the sexed-up, if somewhat silly, single *Foxy*. But overall the vibe is more sunbanned South than mad scientist drag strip, which reflects his own filmmaking sensibilities. A couple of the tracks are generic Zombie creepers (*The Devil's Rejects*, *Lords Of Salem*), but they're more than countered for by the anxious doom on the instrumental *100 Ways*, the sickly acoustic twang of *Death Of A Fool* and the catchy, manic wail of *Let It All Bleed Out*. All in all, a righteous resurrection.

DA ***

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THE INDEPENDENTS

Eternal Bond

Sue Records

What's cool about The Independents isn't that they were managed by Joey Ramone or how they actually live out the D.I.Y. lifestyle implied by their handle. What's cool is how they twist up bits of surf, skank, punk and country into spooky rock 'n' roll tunes packed with as much 1950s sock-hop innocence as 1970s punk rock danger. *Eternal Bond* evolves the signature follow-the-bouncing-bass sound with a romantic rock-kill-billy anthem (The Next Kiss Is The Last Goodbye) and swinging power ballad called Baby Doll. If you like it rough, there's a nasty punk cut (Waste Of Flesh) they could have culled from the cutting floor of the Ramones' *Animal Boy* album, and two tracks (Hideaway, Alone) that sound like toss-aways until you really listen to the lyrics. Check 'em at theindependents.net. **TD** ★★★★★

Punk



average. Of course, not to be overlooked is the psychobilly-themed fairy tale album artwork by Gris Grimy, complete with body parts, babes and booze.

BB ★★★★★/2



THE VAN ORSDELS

Miami Morgue Riot

Crazy Love Records

Like true psychobilly crooners, South Florida's Van Orsdel's offer up thirteen tracks about murder, the devil, and murderous devil women. Tracks like TVD Got, Dancing Devils and Dead Of Night have enough energy to get the wrecking party started, while cuts like 666, Wreckage and Hey, Hey mellow out at mid-tempo (while preserving some admittedly badass bass lines) and Coming For You features an unexpected metal breakdown that somehow fits a song about killing. The downside is vocals that are a little rough compared to seasoned vets of the genre, but still above

Psychobilly



YELLS FROM THE CRYPT

Various

Graveworm Records

Horror punk comps are a dime a dozen nowadays, but Graveworm Records manages to distinguish itself from the pack somewhat on *Yells From the Crypt*—a collection of surf, dark country, and rockabilly—by concentrating on terror tunes from the lighter side of the tomb. Unfortunately, the gems are few

Compilation

and far between. The good: Alex Machine oozes out worthy Gramps-worship psychobilly with Blood On The Grill, while The Route 66 Killers, Gein and the Graverobbers, and a band called Lona & The Love Objects chill the blood with drippy, scary, surf tunes. The bad: pretty much the rest of the album, which ranges from boring (The Cryptomaniacs) to annoying (The Greepriks), to so weird it's tough to take seriously. If you need to hear what horror bluegrass sounds like check out Colonel Sanders Grave's *CSG Theme*, otherwise, sit this disc out. **AL** ★★



PROM QUEEN MASSACRE

Various

Horror Hitz

Featuring over twenty of today's most high-octane horror punk outfits and narration by gothic trash rock icon Wednesday 13 (RM45), *Prom Queen Massacre* takes us inside the high school us horror nuts wish we could have attended. Hardcore horror punks will find a lot of the music familiar, with previously released tracks by the likes of Blitzkid, Michale Graves, and Psycho Charger, but there's still plenty of tasty new flesh from The Jackalopes, Trashlight Vision (featuring ex-Murderdolls Acey Slade), and Danzig-like howlers Dirty Dead. Even though some of the bands here are generic, it's made up for in clean production values and ghoulishly evil energy. With only a few bad tracks to be found on it, *Prom Queen Massacre* gets a big blood smeared A for effort and execution. **AL** ★★★★★



HIMSA

Hail Horror

Prosthetic Records

Himsa built themselves a tidy following with their combination of ripping off Swedish thrash metal and the gothic aesthetic hand-me-downs of AFI and Danzig, but on *Hail Horror* they've put away those dark fashions for a heavy metal look and the heaviest sound they can muster. Lyrically, *Hail Horror* offers nothing more than the same themes of politics and religion visited countless times in heavy music, with no true ties to the genre, despite the implications of its title. In a move that questions good taste, the band's website, himsa.org, features a collage of suicide victims and descriptions of their self-inflicted bullet deaths. With its mix of gut-churning vocals and blazing leads, Himsa's disgustingly heavy sound is satisfying enough, but if you listen to Slayer, Iron Maiden and In Flames, you've probably heard this album far too many times already. **AL** ★



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AFTER A DECADE-LONG SLUMBER, THE GHASTLY ONES
ARE BACK FROM THE GRAVE AND READY TO PARTY LIKE IT'S 1969.

WAVES FROM THE GRAVE

BY PAUL CORUPE

When you name your band after one of cult director Andy Milligan's most eccentric films, you better be prepared to back it up with some sensuously wild music. Though some may not share The Ghastly Ones' fondness for Milligan's late-'60s freakshow of a killer butchering guests at a will reading, they can't deny that the band's spine-chilling instrumental rock perfectly captures a fun, 1960s horror pop-culture vibe.

"I remember reading a review that said Andy Milligan films are the only films allowed to be screened in Hell," says Norman Cabrera of The Ghastly Ones. "His films are all incredibly horrible hand-held camera stuff, but there's something very demented about them that we like. When people finally get to see *The Ghastly Ones*, they're actually pretty shocked."

Cabrera, who makes his living creating makeup effects for Hollywood, formed the band in fall of 1996 with like-minded surf fiends Kevin "Go Go Ghostly" Battene and KNOB EFX makeup artist Garrett "Dr. Lehou" Immiel. He inadvertently landed the band a deal on Rob Zombie's short-lived *Zombie A-Go-Go* Records while doing creature effects for one of Rob Zombie's videos. Cabrera played the rocker their demo tape, who in turn signed them after attending their first show at a bar in LA.

With their 1997 debut album, *A-Haunting We Wan Go-Go*, the band earned a reputation for its deranged surly mix of vampires and The Ventures on tracks like "Hauin' Hearse and Spook-

master. Cabrera, who drums under the name Baron Shivers, says the fit was natural.

"That guitar sound—that wet, reverby sound has a spooky quality to it, and that's probably why you find such a strong connection between horror imagery and surf music," he explains, adding that The Ghastly Ones' favorite film is actually Del Tenny's *The Horror of Party Beach* (see p.52), which offers one of the best examples of this spooky, sun-kissed style. Tenny's mad monster movie helped shape their sound thanks to its inclusion of a performance by The Del-Aires.

"They're just like this awesome New Jersey surf band from 1964, and we just thought it was infinitely cool," beams Cabrera. "It's sort of what The Ghastly Ones are about."

Now, nearly a decade following their first album, The Ghastly Ones dust off their capes and top hats for another round of spooky surf fun. After creating a profile on MySpace.com, fans of the band crept out of the dark wanting to know where the band had been for the last eight years. The SoCal ghoulies had in fact been busy with their filling day jobs creating creature effects.

"I've been doing that for probably around twenty years," says Cabrera, who got his start working with famed effects man Rick Baker. "I've done movies like *Harry and The Hendersons*,

Scarecrows and *Planet of the Apes*. I also did a lot of stuff in *Hellboy*, like the walking corpse." But such demanding jobs prevented the members of The Ghastly Ones from concentrating on the band as much as they would have liked—at least until recently. Now, not only have the newly reformed Ghastly Ones added an organist—Dave Klein from former label mates The Bomboras—

they've also just released *All Plastic Assembly Kit*, a rarities compilation (available exclusively at theghastlyones.com).

"It's not technically our official second album; it's a limited release for people who know about us and were waiting to get something new," explains Cabrera. And the wait was worth it—*All Plastic Assembly Kit* is a cool collection that sees the band spiking their eerie surf

sound with sound bites from trashy horror flicks, and offering spooky takes on vintage tracks by The New Dimensions and The Avengers VI. The production sounds slightly stripped down compared to their debut, but that's a good thing, as it gives the band a rawer, creepier, edge.

In addition, an album of all-new material is slated for mid-summer, which Cabrera says will feature "more keyboard-driven stuff, more garagey vocal tunes and some other weird stuff." He adds, "We're not trying to be scary or wicked, we just really dig that '60s spookiness!"



PLAY DEAD

**GRAPHICS****PLAYABILITY****SHIVERS**

HIGHEST RATING IS OUT OF THREE.

GAMES REVIEWED BY ANDREW LEE

**FURY OF DRACULA**Board Game
Fantasy Flight Games

Originally released by Games Workshop in 1987, *Fury of Dracula* has been dug up and pumped full of fresh blood by the fiends at Fantasy Flight Games — much like they did with the retrobed *Arkham Horror* game (AMP54). Set in 1898, it's a richly atmospheric adventure replete with standout game pieces and wonderfully illustrated playing cards dripping with moody text that could have been ripped right from the pages of Stoker's novel.

Utilizing a user-friendly rule book, one player assumes the role of the Count while up to four others take on the roles of vampire hunters. Acting on reports and rumours, the hunters track the Dark One through various cities. An interesting twist has the character of Mina Harker, who's been bitten by Dracula, helping to locate him through hypnosis. Using event cards and rolls of the dice, hunters strike at Dracula (who can turn into a bat and disappear) and his minions, using wooden stakes, knives and sacred bullets.

Games can last up to four hours and get quite tense when battle commences. Victory is declared if the hunters are able to locate and kill the Dark Prince or if Vlad is able to avoid capture for six days, leaving behind a host of vampires to feed on shivering, quivering young maidens (delicious!). It goes without saying: *Fury of Dracula* is a game vamp lovers can really sink their teeth into.

**CONDEMNED: CRIMINAL ORIGINS**Board Game
Sage

Once in a great while a game shows up that I know is going to give me nightmares — *Condemned: Criminal Origins* is one of them. Playmate assumes the role of Agent Thomas, an FBI man framed for the deaths of two police officers, who plunges into the sucky criminal underworld in an attempt to clear himself. This is literally a dark game, so you'll need your flashlight as you stumble through photo-real dilapidated tenements and seedy subway stations. Armed with standard weaponry, you'll soon find yourself covered in blood and broken teeth as you club crackheads and zap vagrants with tasers.

The AI in the game is incredibly smart, as enemies repeatedly sneak up and startle you. Players also use CSI techniques to investigate crime scenes, although this is where the game drags. Thankfully, the moody soundtrack is probably the best I've ever heard in a video game, which helps jack up the fright factor. Truly a title meant to be played alone in the dark.

**DEADLY VACATION**RPG
Neosoft

The lifeless body of a retired lawyer has been found floating in a river near the Paradise Campground, his head caved in by some kind of blunt instrument. The only clues on the body are a small square of white cloth pinned to his shirt and a celestial chart tucked into his pocket. The police have been called in but it's up to you and your friends (as players) to solve the mystery. Be careful, though, because one of you is the murderer.

Deadly Vacation is a fun game for eight people, all of whom assume the roles of various characters (like Steve the jealous race-car driver and Sticky the tattooed, pierced artist). Through character interactions using scripted questions and answers, players formulate their theories on the identity of the killer. Games typically last about three hours and can be a blast, especially if players immerse themselves in the roles. It's kinda like *Clan*, but in the woods... and with more belly-button rings.

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Classic Cut

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I PUT A SPELL ON YOU



1956 - USA
SCREAMIN' JAY HAWKINS
Columbia Records

In the entire history of rock 'n' roll, for all that unrequited love, all those teardrops and broken hearts, only one crooner fell upon a real pragmatic solution: a voodoo curse. In 1956, while Doria Day, Bing Crosby and The Platters were singing about holding hands, Jay Hawkins was realizing his apt ability to take a song and howl, shriek and cuss it straight into the grave. But his calling card song *I Put A Spell On You*, though later acknowledged by the Rock 'N' Roll Hall of Fame as his legacy and trademark number, wasn't initially a commercial success thanks to its taboo subject matter.

The classic, creepy version of *Spell* was actually his second attempt, recorded after Hawkins and his blues band were roped by a Columbia employee into a night of heavy in-studio drinking. As a result, the smooth, dark love ballad was transformed into a maniacal, cackling, voodoo classic. Immediately identifiable from the first few beats, the song opens with a creeping arrangement by the backing Leroy Kirkland Orchestra, creating an insidious 3/4 mock waltz and the theatrical background which Screamin' Jay broodingly steps into with the classic words "I put a spell on you, 'cause you're mine. You better stop the things you do, I ain't lyin'." It spirals obsessively downward from there, degenerating into gurgling wails, threatening the fallen love with black magic in lines like "I don't care if you don't want me, I'm yours right now." Though Hawkins had virtually no recollection of recording the song, he had given birth to a monster. He soon realized that he could "do more destroying a song and screaming it to death", than he could as an average blues artist, and overnight, he became Screamin' Jay Hawkins.

On the advice of pioneering DJ Alan Freed, Hawkins ran with the idea of a creepy live act that suited the demented voodoo

overtone of the song. He arrived on stage inside a coffin carried solemnly by pallbearers, and would explode out of it, howling. The macabre act soon included smoke, snakes, spiders, shrunk-in heads, and a flaming, chain-smoking skull on a stick - named Henry.

Whether he realized it or not, Hawkins was writing the first chapter in the history of macabre music, paving the way for theatrical shock-rock acts from Black Sabbath, Alice Cooper, KISS, Ozzy and Marilyn Manson to GG Allin, Danzig and the Cramps. Eccentric and prone to attacks of snakeskin, capes and gold lamé, Hawkins embraced dementia and intentionally poor taste in a genre that was all about decorum and commercial appeal.

He also pushed his luck with his irreverent take on the black "savage" stereotype, appearing as a witch doctor with a bone through his nose, which earned him the ire of the NAACP. In the ensuing fallout, the song was banned by some stations for its obsessive and alleged "cannibalistic" overtones, DJs were fired for playing it, and his coffin supplier cut him off for making fun of the dead. But in the wake of all the controversy, the single sold over a million copies.

As Hawkins howled his way through the following decades, his bizarre stage show flourished and his equally bizarre persona stuck to him, landing him a string of cameo movie roles. Most memorable was that of the late-night motel clerk in Jim Jarmusch's *Mystery Train* - and *Spell* itself also features in Jarmusch's *Stranger Than Paradise*. Later, Spanish horror director Alex de la Iglesia (*Acción mutante*, *Day of the Beast*) cast him fittingly in his black magic love story *Perdidos Durango* (a.k.a. *Dance with the Devil*) as Adolfo, a voodoo henchman. The song has also been covered by Diamanda Galás in Oliver Stone's *Natural Born Killers* and by Marilyn Manson in David Lynch's *Lost Highway*.

While *I Put A Spell On You* continues to live on as a creepy classic ripe for reinterpretation, it will always be married to the persona it created: the cackling, casket-popping ghoul known as Screamin' Jay Hawkins. Not surprisingly, just before Hawkins passed away in 2000, at age 70, he chose cremation for himself, saying "When I go, I don't want to be buried. I've been in too many damn coffins already!"

Chris Colahan



Screamin' Jay Hawkins and his trusty sidekick "Henry".

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IN STORES APR. 28

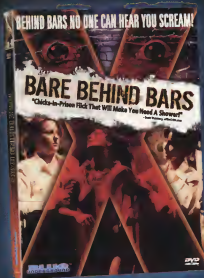
The Night Evelyn Came Out of the Grave
color / 1971 / 96 mins. / 2.35:1 / 16x9

The Red Queen Kills 7 Times
color / 1972 / 103 mins. / 2.35:1 / 16x9

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